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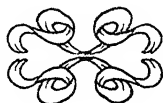
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SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTT,  
ULSOOR, BANGALORE.

**WHISPERS OF THE SOUL**  
**AND OTHER DISCOURSES**  
BY  
**SWAMI YOGESWARANANDA**



**SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTT,**  
**Ulsoor, Bangalore.**

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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These discourses were delivered in Bangalore, Madras, and other places. Though independent of one another, yet, in this volume, they are so arranged as to possess some kind of unity. So we request the reader to go through them all before forming any opinion of the doctrines taught in them. We hope this book will be of some benefit to the reading public interested in Religious Literature.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTT, )  
ULSOOR, BANGALORE, .

*April, 1911.* )





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## Whispers of the Soul.

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NO study is more instructive, more beneficial, and more elevating than the study of Human Nature, and of all the varieties of knowledge relating to the nature of man, which the wise men of all times and climes have told us to acquire, none is so interesting and important as that which gives us an insight into the human soul. "Know thyself," is the advice given to us alike by the philosophers of ancient India and the philosophers of ancient Greece. A man may possess a vast amount of information about the flora and the fauna of the earth, he may be fully acquainted with the properties and the uses of countless minerals found on the globe, yet his knowledge will hardly be worthy of the name, if he be uninformed about the real nature of his own self, or if he do not even try to possess any knowledge about it. For, the greatest prerogative of man is self-consciousness. Man possesses not only the power of perceiving the various objects of the world and their relations, but also the power of enquiring into the secrets of his own heart—its motives, its wants, and its woes. The thousand feelings that almost incessantly rise in his breast; the numerous inclinations and desires

that impel him to perform various actions; the moments of sweet repose and satisfaction that come to his mind after its states of noble effort; all these can be studied by him alone. Animals feel pleasure and pain; they are actuated by love and hatred much in the same way as men are; but the power of reflection or introspection—the ability to turn the light of the mind upon itself—is denied to them. Man alone can study his soul, and so we feel the justness of the teaching of the wise men of the East and of the West—"Know thyself."

The mental world of man is highly complex in its nature. Its facts, its phenomena, and its traits are so manifold and intricate as to require the all-engrossing devotion of a man for their elaborate study.

To-day, my intention is not to dwell on any of the subtle characteristics of the mind which the learned love to discuss, but to point out to you some of its obvious features and dwell on their implications—implications that do not ordinarily strike men, and so are not pondered over by them.

The first characteristic of the human mind, which is so obvious as to seem to float on its surface and which may be noticed by any one who desires to do so, is the fear of death. Nothing man dreads so much as the extinction of his life. It is a feature not only of his nature but of all other living creatures. We observe, the minute cell under the microscope contract and double itself when it is pricked with a pin, and thus shows, as it were, its unwillingness to be deprived of its existence

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The seedling which has been brought and lodged by the passing wind in a dark recess under a hanging rock sprouts up, and then, how its growing stem creeps, bends, and twists itself in its struggles to gaze up to the sun, its life! It is afraid of death! The Indian fig plant which has germinated on the brink of a precipice plunges down its root scores of feet to reach soil and suck up food from it. It does not wish to die of starvation, but struggles its utmost for life. And all animals, from the moth that lives for an hour to the lion, the lord of the forest, show the fear of death. The fear of death, the love of life, is of the nature of an instinct in them. When we note the unwillingness of some animals to follow the lead of butchers, when we hear the pitiful cry and observe the tremblings of the lamb brought before the altar for sacrifice, we do not fail to be struck with the deep-seated instinct of all living creatures to shun death and enjoy the blessings of life

Man is born with this fear. When a baby is tossed up in the air by its fondling nurse to be caught again by her protecting arms, it shows signs of trepidation. In children, as in animals, this fear of death, this clinging to life, is merely instinctive. Children's minds are too undeveloped to form any idea of what death is. But in grown-up men, this fear acquires a new character. It is no longer simply a blind impulse to shrink back from something dangerous. To the fully unfolded minds of adults, death seems surrounded by all horrors. Grown-up men are gifted by nature with

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imagination. As memory enables them to view the past, so imagination paints before their mind's eye a picture of the future. Combining the elements of experience of the past and of the present, mingling the light of reality with the shade of unreality, imagination draws its chiaroscuro, sometimes pleasant, sometimes painful. When men remember that many of their acquaintance whom they liked, friends whom they valued, and near and dear relations whom they loved with their whole heart and whom they never dreamt of losing, have all fallen under the heavy hand of Death, when they see that year after year, summer and winter, Death mows down its huge crop of men and women, and when they try to picture the unknown land to which the souls of the departed go, Death appears all the more terrible in their eyes. The faint mental picture they form of the future state, the feelings of uncertainty and fear that are always roused with it, stand in vivid contrast with all they experience here on this earth. They know the joys of life. They see the sun, the moon, and the stars; the many-colored flowers of the field, the lovely human faces, and the beautiful objects of art; they hear the songs of the cuckoo, the thrush, the nightingale, and numerous other minstrels of the air, and experience all the pleasures of music evoked by skilled hands from the lute, the violin, and other instruments; they inhale the fragrance of the lily and the rose, of the violet and the honeysuckle; they enjoy fruits and herbs from Nature's store and tempting dishes concocted by culinary art; they feel the

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sweetness of repose after day's labour and the bracing touch of the cool morning air after night's rest; they relish the companionship of books, the study of pictures and statues, the delights of social intercourse, the bliss of loving and of being loved; knowing and feeling all these, they cling to life with tenacity. Giving up all these blessings, they do not like to pass through the dark cold way of the grave into the unknown country with its uncertain pleasures and pains. However much religious teachers may have tried to transfuse with light the picture of the future world and bring before men's minds the felicities that await the righteous there, ordinary men have always recoiled out of weakness of heart from death, and looked on it with fear and trembling. To be severed from those that are beloved and from the pleasures that are fondly cherished appear to the generality of men to be too heavy a pain to be outweighed by the happiness of the future life. And when they imagine the pangs of heart that those they love will feel when they shall part from them never probably to meet again, when they hear in fancy their sighs and groans and loud lamentations, they prospectively feel the agony of separation, and in sympathy and love, desire that they may not depart from their own. So, if they be thoughtless and sensual, Death appears to them a cruel monster devouring with relentless jaws men and women without discrimination; marring the glory of this beautiful earth, and putting gall and wormwood into the milk of human happiness.

To those who are thoughtful and spiritually disposed, Death seems a mysterious dispensation of Providence. Death is figured by them as a shadowy angel leading God's creatures out from this life into another, from the visible world into the invisible, of which no glimpses can be had by the senses and the intellect of man. But both the thoughtless and the thoughtful, the sensual and the spiritual alike dread death, and prefer the seen and the certain blessings of this life to the unseen and uncertain destiny of the life hereafter.

Universal though the fear of death is, subject to it though the young and the old are, yet greater hold has it upon the hearts of the old than upon the hearts of the young. With age, man's love of life increases. Youth is capable of doing daring acts that age shudders to achieve, nay, even to hear and think of. How like a fawn a boy clammers up a steep rock! He does not think that it may be hard work to get down. How with bouyant spirits and daring, a young man, out of love of sport, courts adventures with wild animals in forests! How he desires to see unknown lands, heedless of the thousand dangers that may befall him there! The thought of death rarely, if ever, enters into his heart! But an old man ponders many a time over the practicality and the impracticality, the advantages and the disadvantages, the fears and the safeguards of an undertaking before he launches into it. To him the words danger and death are highly significant—they conjure up in his mind terrible images. Life and its joys are sweet

to the old man. He has lived in the clay cottage of the physical body so long as to think it his home—his permanent dwelling-place by birthright. He feels no inclination to leave it for an unknown lodging in an unknown land beyond the grave. Though grey hairs, falling teeth, flabby muscles, and feeble limbs have given notice to him of the will of God that soon he shall have to quit his fleshy abode, yet he, like a foolish tenant, indulges in vain hopes that the Lord will not so soon send his minion Death to drive him out. Such is the aversion of many an old man from death that he does not like to be called old by the young, for to his ears the word "old" seems to carry a veiled insinuation that "Soon thou shalt leave this world." Though extreme sorrow from mishaps, excessive pain from incurable diseases may goad some men to wish for speedy death and thus get a release from unbearable misery, yet such cases are exceptional in their nature. As long as even a faint ray of hope for a better state remains, every man clings to life with tenacity, and does not like to lose the pleasures of this earth for ever.

Philosophers say that nature has implanted this fear in all creatures to serve her own end. Nature wishes that every creature should live and multiply, and thus perpetuate the species to which it belongs. Nature is zealous of the continuance of types. She desires that every creature should make its exit from the world when it has played its part and fulfilled her purpose. So she has given every creature this fear of death, this

clinging to life, as a counterpoise and safeguard against the reckless out-burst of active powers with which she has endowed it. The fear of death, the love of life, make it prudent and cautious of danger.

The fear of death and the love of life (and these are really one, being two aspects of the same feeling) have given rise everywhere among all creatures to struggle for existence. From the micro-organism to man, all are desirous of living and getting good things conducive to life, of multiplying and filling the earth with their own kindred. But the earth is limited in extent; its supplies of food and other necessities of life have not been sufficient to meet demands for them, and the inevitable consequence of these circumstances is that there is perpetual contest among its inhabitants. Out of the contest, those that are strong, those that are intelligent are coming out victorious; they are possessing and enjoying the good things of life; while those that are weak, those that are less gifted with intellect, are going to the wall to form stepping stones for Nature's favoured ones to rise and flourish. So everywhere in the world, the heart-wrung groans of the vanquished and dying weak are ever mingling with shouts of joy of the victorious strong, and thus Nature's perpetual tragedy and comedy are being simultaneously enacted.

Men, civilized men, have tried and are trying to minimize the evils of this contest—to take away the keen edge of this struggle. By entering into society, by discovering and inculcating restraining

moral rules for the guidance of all persons, by bringing the softening effect of Religion to bear on their lives, noble men and women, under the influence of a voice coming from the depth of their nature, are attempting to resist the evils arising from the universal desire for life and its goods. Notwithstanding their efforts, the keenness of the struggle has not disappeared. Suppressed in one form, the struggle, like a chronic disease, appears in other forms. In human society, there is still unjust competition instead of just co-operation; instead of peace there is warfare; instead of brotherly clasping of each other's hands there is devilish grasping at each other's throat. Everywhere on earth, men and women are still guided more by self-interest than by desire for others' good; they still often struggle for and clutch at things conducive to life regardless of others' interests. And out of the clamorous uproar caused by the millions of human inhabitants of the earth, out of the confused din of their up-lifted voices, you can distinguish two words reiterated by all and forming the burthen of their demands—"Me" "Me," "Mine" "Mine" All of them are crying out these words again and again. Any one can easily understand that selfishness dominates the hearts of men and women; it is the main-spring of all their actions.

But the question naturally rises in our minds, notwithstanding their selfishness, notwithstanding their selfish struggle for life and its pleasures, notwithstanding greater or less success in their attempts, are they

able to live and enjoy themselves for ever? Can they keep death out of doors? While after severe efforts some men come to possess what they longed for and just sit down to feast themselves on good things, Death rings the bell and summons them away. Some others spend their whole lives in fruitless toil for the fulfilment of their desires, in vain struggles for what they cannot attain, and then suddenly their lives come to an end—"Out, out, brief candle!" And what a melancholy sight it is to see men die—wither like annual plants after living for a while! So some philosophers ask, Why should man suffer from the thousand miseries of life and attempt always to elude the grasp of death only to be overtaken by him at last? Not finding any answer to their query, they conclude, life is vanity; it is a meaningless dream; the sooner a man gets rid of it, the better it is for him.

My dear friends, Is it really so? Is life really a meaningless dream? Is there no meaning of this universal love of life—this longing to live on and not meet with death? Is this universal desire given to man by way of mockery to delude him with vain hopes and oppress him with vain fears? We shall come to consider this later on.

The second characteristic of the human mind is its love of pleasure. Man seems to be ever seeking pleasure, ever trying to be happy though his efforts meet with very little success. Whether we look at the child or at the old man, we see signs of a keen and insatiable desire to become happy. Just observe the ways of any child. Watch it as it plays with its toys. How the little

creature with its sunny face moves about! Can there be a better picture of content and gladness? But as we watch for a while, we suddenly hear the child cry. The toys no longer can please it. See! it has dashed them on the ground out of dissatisfaction and is filling the air with loud shrieks! It wants to be with its mother. The mother comes running and fondly lifts it on her arms and nestles it on her breast. As it reposes on the soft bosom of its mother, we think that it has found, after its storm of passion, a haven of rest, and so will not stir and show restlessness again. But a few minutes' watching falsifies our expectation. It again clamours loudly to be let down on the ground to play or wishes to get upon the arms of some other known person that comes by. Thus a child's life evinces its restless longing for happiness, which comes to it only for a moment to vanish again. Judged by the various expressions of the child's countenance, the child's mental life manifests to us its ebb and flow—its moments of satisfaction and of dissatisfaction, and the latter are as obtrusively conspicuous in it as in the life of a grown-up man.

When the child grows into a boy, do the signs of discontent diminish? Do we see in the boy the love of pleasure abating? From the experiences of childhood, however circumscribed they may be, does the boy learn to be more contented? The boy is impelled by new desires, seeks for new pleasures. His growing mind seeks satisfaction in new channels of activity. Various games in company of other boys, good and bad; fairy



tales heard from his grand-mother either sitting by the fire-side or lying in the open air at evening when twilight deepens into night and the stars start out of their hiding places; the praise of teachers and schoolmates for intelligence or for feats of strength, and the bringing home of prizes won; new books, new clothes, and new friends; all charm him, but charm him only for a time. After some time the old games grow disgusting, the grand-mother's tales appear incredible and stale, the applause of teachers and fellow-students is neither always won nor continues to be attractive, and the company of friends lose their charm. The boy grows dissatisfied with his state. He wants to be a young man. He envies young men for the privileges they enjoy. The life of young men appears golden in his eyes, and he eagerly longs to live it.

When the boy grows into a young man, his case does not improve. His appetite for pleasure is more whetted, but satiety does not come so soon as before. On the other hand, the moments of satisfaction grow fewer and fewer. With the greater unfolding of his mind, new thoughts and new sentiments are stirred in it, and his senses crave for unlimited gratification. Unfavourable circumstances, and the warnings and admonitions of parents and other well-wishers put a galling but wholesome restraint on his wild desires. Then, after a time, comes the critical age of youth; his body heralds the incoming change by various signs. His beard and moustaches begin to grow, his voice breaks, and an uni-

versal restlessness is seen in his behaviour. Along with these external changes there occurs in him an internal change. His heart feels an indescribable longing for something—a longing at first indefinite but gradually developing into the furious excitement of a passion. On account of this internal change, the company of woman appears to him charming. The young man describes a new beauty in young women—to him they look lovelier than before. At times this new illusory view of woman's beauty comes to him with such force that his female friends and acquaintances seem to him to have suddenly grown more handsome and winning in appearance. He does not then understand that it is not that their faces have acquired smoother features and their complexions have put on lovelier tints, but that a new disposition is born in him, which is creating this exaggerated view of feminine beauty. The meaning of this sudden change in his nature,—a change which gives a new pleasure from the sight of women and makes him long for their company—gradually dawns upon his mind ! But O ! into what follies is he led by this knowledge ! Unless he is protected at this time by the vigilance of guardians and friends, lust leads him into great dangers and casts the deep and deadly shadow of sin upon his soul.

A young man not only feels exquisite pleasure in the company of women, but finds delight in various other things and occupations. Food, drink, dress, the company of friends, play, and laughter he enjoys more than ever in his life. He plunges himself headlong into

any pursuit that promises him pleasure and excitement, however much it may cause him pain in the end. Alas ! the fire of his desire waxes stronger and stronger as it is fed, and no abiding satisfaction comes from the gratification of it. Yet he goes on sucking every source of pleasure to be only disappointed in the end. Then the time comes when he forms the project of getting himself married. Every man hopes to enter into a state of perfect felicity by marriage. O ! what elysian dreams fill his breast when he views the prospect of winning a bride ! The gorgeous bridal procession, the marriage bed strewn with flowers, the sounds of music and laughter ringing through the marriage hall, the pleasant jokes of fair friends and relations, all raise sweet visions in his mind and make his heart leap with joy. The responsibilities, the anxieties, and the sorrows of married life then do not frighten him with their sombre pictures. His heart is full of expectation and hope. He thinks marriage to be a foretaste of the heavenly state—thinks that one who enters into it becomes as happy as the denizens of heaven. He imagines that all the discontent and restlessness of his nature will come to an end, all his wants will vanish, and his heart will receive its full measure of felicity when he shall be inseparably united with a fair companion. At last the long-expected event—the wedding—takes place. The hand of a young woman is joined with his own. But is the celestial state so much longed for actually realised ? Let all married people answer.

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The young man often learns to his sorrow that the married life is not like a bed of roses as he imagined it to be. But there being no good in looking backwards, he tries to reconcile himself as best as he can to the altered circumstances of his life. As time passes, with the increase of his family, increase his cares and anxieties, and he strains every nerve to free himself from them. But how often he finds that the thoughts of bread and butter, of oil and spices, make him forget the high ideals of life! How often he feels that the intricate affairs of his family life fetter the healthy growth of his spirit! How often the conviction comes to him with full force that the pleasures which drew him with their charms are mockeries! Yet, in imitation of other young men, he often plunges himself thoughtlessly into them, and hopes to get from them more durable satisfaction of mind.

In manhood his life does not change its essential feature. The same love of happiness that dominated him in youth impells him in his activities, but also the same feeling of dissatisfaction that characterised his youth haunts him, nay, haunts him now even more than before. Thousand vexations for opportunities lost, thousand sorrows for duties unfulfilled, thousand cares for tasks to be done, thousand regrets for sins committed either through carelessness or through wilfulness, eat like cankers into his heart. Slowly the pleasures of the senses begin to pall. The declining years of manhood come. Thoughts of death occasionally rise in his

mind and fill it with fear. He broods in anxiety over the fate of his wife and children after his departure from this world. Gradually the evening of his life deepens, and the powers of his body and mind decay. He then looks back regretfully over his past years—years gone to return no more, and awaits in fear the advent of Death. At last Death comes, the fitful fever of his life is ended, and dust is returned to dust. His neighbours consolingly tell his relations, The old man is gone to dwell in heaven where the sorrows of life do not exist, and the souls of the dead are at rest. But the thoughtful ask, Do all really find eternal peace after death?

Be that as it may, if we view the life of an ordinary man on this side of the grave, it looks like a tedious groping along a narrow passage full of trials and troubles and wrapped mostly in gloom, with only fitful gleams of light to help him in his progress; or it appears like a long chase of will-o-the-wisps which cheer and draw him only to plunge him into a bog of misery. Every man hopes to attain permanent satisfaction—never-ending satiety of his soul's hunger—by getting various desired objects such as wealth, rank, honour, large family etc., but alas! his hope is never realised. The desired things may come to him if he be fortunate, but they vanish also quickly like the beautiful evening clouds. They fill him with gladness for some time, they intoxicate his heart, but like the effect of inebriation, the joy passes away to give place to dissatisfaction and regret. And we see also, that

every one who lives for pleasure becomes, after a time, a slave of his appetites and passions. Under their sway, his will gets vitiated, and so he continues to seek satisfaction from worldly pleasures, though his experience teaches him again and again the vanity of such a procedure. Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say: Hungry camels greedily chew thorny plants, though their mouths bleed profusely; even so worldly men eagerly enjoy earthly pleasures, though they cause them so much pain.

So we see that, in this world, most persons are trying to get permanent satisfaction, peace, and rest, from those things from which they can never be found. The more they try to quench their thirst for pleasure by drinking from worldly sources, the more they find their thirst increasing and burning their hearts, yet they return to the same founts again and again, never learning any lesson from their painful experience. They seem to be labouring under a charm by which they are being perpetually misled, and the energies of their lives perpetually spoiled. Is there no escape out of it? Should man live and die struggling for happiness without gaining it? Should this burning thirst of his soul ever remain unsatisfied? We naturally ask such questions.

The third characteristic of the human mind is its love of power.

Let a man be given the assurance that he will live long, if not for ever; let him be given what he usually desires—a beautiful virtuous wife and wealth sufficient

to maintain himself and his family in ease and comfort : let him receive sincere marks of honour from his neighbours and countrymen; let him hold a pretty high place in the government of his country; will he be satisfied? Will his heart crave for nothing more? We fear he will show the same restlessness and discontent as is evinced by a man that does not possess these advantages. Ambition will prevent him from enjoying peace: ambition will point out to him new objects for attainment, new heights of greatness for ascent. The love of power which was so long dormant will be roused in his soul. He will no longer be contented because he has a good wife, but will desire that his neighbours should admire her, and envy him for having such a beautiful sharer of his joys and sorrows. He will no longer enjoy in peace the competence with which he can support without difficulty himself and his family, but the desire of hoarding, of adding figure after figure to the long row of figures representing his deposit with his banker, will slowly develop in his breast. He may be respected by his neighbours and countrymen, yet his heart will yearn for the plaudits of men of distant lands. He may be occupying a responsible place in the government of his country, yet other places above his own will fascinate him with their many advantages. Thus, if the love of power begins to develop in his soul as it does in most men's, on he must move bidding good-bye to contentment; fret he must for things unattained; engage he must again in the hide-and-seek games of the world.

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The love of power animates all men. It is seen in boys who try to make themselves leaders of other boys. It manifests itself in slaves and servants as admiration for their masters, who appear to them like gods on earth ; how they wish to be masters themselves ! It shows its presence in men of all ranks. The poor clerk in a government office aspires to be an officer holding a responsible position ; the officer in a responsible place desires to rise still higher in rank, to take on himself the burden of arduous work, though he may not be conscientiously performing his allotted duties. The highest officer of the state, the councillor or the minister dreams of winning a kingdom. The king desires to become emperor. And the emperor ? Is he free from thirst for power ? We read in history of many an emperor who wished to be deified by his subjects. Thus does man long for still greater power after attaining its summit on earth ! Not only do wealth and rank rouse in men's souls this inordinate desire for power, but even intellectual pursuits fill men with the same fiery longing. The scholar who consumes midnight oil in poring over books, old and new ; the painter who, with infinite care, lays colour on his canvas day after day, and makes, by minute laborious touches, a beautiful picture shine on it ; the scientist who, in quest of a new fact of nature, performs every day experiments in his laboratory or keeps night after night lonely watches gazing into the silent depth of the star-lit sky ; the poet who immersed in deep reverie creates out of his fancy beautiful fictitious



characters, or bodies forth his noble thoughts and sentiments in a language captivating to men of all ages and climes; all these are great seekers after power. The power that comes from knowing more than others, the power that comes from producing an object of art that will gladden for centuries the hearts of millions and elicit admiration from them; the power that comes from wresting from the bosom of Nature a new truth for the benefit of the world; the power that comes from indelibly writing in a nation's literature beautiful ideas and sentiments in musical words; all these different kinds of power, all these different methods of extending influence, of enhancing the value of life, are attractive to men. All men are swayed by the love of power. Even those whom the world regards as spiritual are not free from this universal desire. The hermit or the Yogi who avoids the defiling atmosphere of the world and wrestles with the weaknesses of his flesh is an aspirant of power, though power of an extraordinary kind. He may not care for wealth, honor, rank, and other objects eagerly sought by worldly men, but he may be bent upon gaining occult powers or some kind of power that, he believes, will be of use to him in the other world.

For every man, the necessities of life are really very few. They can easily be got by any one who honestly toils for them. Food, clothing, a place to sleep in, and other actual requirements of life can be obtained without much importunity from mother Nature. She would gladly give them to all men and make them happy,

were it not for the love of power which makes them discontented and restless. The greater part of a man's energy is spent not in acquiring for himself and for others, the necessities, or even the luxuries of life, but in exercising influence over others, in bringing them under control, or at times, in tyrannizing over them. No doubt, a man who acquires power may use it for a good or a bad end, may use it for others' pleasure or pain, may help or hinder with it the development of others' lives; yet if we take into consideration the actual trend of most men's character—their inveterate selfishness—we cannot say that their craving for power is an unmixed blessing.

More than half the evils of the world owe their origin to men's love of power. It is the love of power that makes men insane, makes men break without hesitation the rules of morality. Lying, forgery, murder, nay, no crime is impossible to the man who is maddened with a passion for power. Such a man believes himself to be one of the God's elect. The world and its pleasures are meant for him. He must go up to the top-rung of the world's ladder; he must push behind all others, nay, if necessary, even trample upon them in his hurried ascent. If, at times, his conscience raises a protest against these abnormal views of self-importance, he tries to cozen it with the assurance, that he is seeking power only for the good of the world; that, as soon as he reaches the desired height of power, he will scatter blessings on all his fellow-men whom he may now be

treating unjustly ; he will give them favourable opportunities of progress ; that they are not so able as himself to rule, and so it is natural that they should remain in subordination. Though his conscience is not satisfied with such false arguments, though it demands from him strict rectitude in his dealings with others, yet, infatuated as he is with an inordinate desire, he turns a deaf ear to her monitions and seeks his end. When after many evil deeds, after many infringements of God's laws, he rises in power, and contemplates with self-satisfaction the high position he has reached, does he look back upon the steps by which he has lifted himself ? Does he repentingly think of the havoc he has made of others' fortunes, the multitude of sacred human lives he has wasted, the number of God's commandments he has wilfully violated, and then try to repair what he has undone ? Far from it. The moment that he attains one peak of power, another and a higher one, looms before him, fascinating his heart. On again he pushes, by any path, straight or crooked, to attain that peak. And how many evil deeds he commits in his head-long ascent ! How many honest hopeful lives he crushes under his heels ! We daily see before our eyes sad sights which the love of power of iniquitous men creates. If the love of power did not sway the hearts of the wicked, there would be greater happiness on earth ; there would be juster distribution of good things God has given to man ; ignorance, homelessness, drunkenness, and prostitution would not show their unsightly

faces, and the blessings of knowledge, prosperity, and virtuous life would be enjoyed more by all.

How futile, after all, is this desire and search for power! Nothing in this world can be obtained unless a price is paid for it. That is Nature's Law. No one can escape from coming under it. He who gains one thing in one place loses another and sometimes a more valuable thing elsewhere. Men that attain power—power by amassing wealth, by winning places or titles, by bringing others under subjugation, or by gaining popularity—buy very dearly; nay, often find that they have been fools in their bargainings.

Let us take the case of the man who attains power by becoming wealthy. Wealth is not an unmixed blessing. There are advantages and disadvantages in possessing it. Cares for the common necessities of life are not, no doubt, felt by the wealthy, but other cares, other anxieties, other miseries, to which the poor are strangers, are borne by them. Beneath their velvet and purple, if you search deeply, you will find innumerable anxieties and passions, like furious fires, consuming their hearts. Wealth exposes its possessor to thousand temptations. A wealthy man easily gets into vices in various ways. First, in most men, wealth gives rise to covetousness. Instead of possessing wealth a man is often possessed by it. The more a rich man gazes upon his hoarded gold, the more he feels a passion for adding to it. When once this passion is roused in his heart, none can say, what evil propensities it will not afterwards bring forth.

The covetous man easily betakes himself to injustice, chicanery, dishonesty, and other forms of wickedness, and once he slides off from the life of rectitude, who can say to what depth of sinfulness he will not go down? Even if a rich man guards himself against covetousness, still he finds it hard to keep his intellectual and spiritual nature unstained and uninjured by the numerous distractions of his life. The cares of preserving wealth, the thoughts of promissory notes, stocks, and bank-accounts, imperceptibly tell upon his mind. That freedom of the head and the heart which characterises a highly intellectual man, is gradually lost by him. His intellect gets narrowed under the constant weight of pecuniary ideas. And those noble feelings springing from whole-hearted devotion to God and morality which we see in highly spiritual men can never be adequately realised by him. Though he believes in God, though he shows love of unimpeachable life, yet the thousand interests of his wealthy life often clash with his spiritual interests. Often he feels that the world draws him one way, and God, another. He cannot follow both at the same time.

The soft and luxurious life which a rich man generally leads is not conducive to self-conquest. Passions cannot be lulled into sleep by high living, idleness, and evil company. Delicious viands, gaudy dress, unrestrained intercourse with persons of questionable morality will but fan passions into full blaze. And when the means of gratification are easily obtainable and the counteracting influences are feeble, passions lead men into

all manner of evil deeds. When pampered, they reduce men to a state of abject slavery. By indulging his passions, no man remains the same as before; slowly fetters are forged round his heart, and he is dragged to the level of the brute. How difficult it is then for a man to raise himself and regain his lost dignity! So, if you enquire into the lives of rich men, you will find many of them slaves of so many passions, addicted to so many vicious habits, that you will never, if you have an inkling of love of virtue, exchange your life for theirs even for all their gold and domains. Even the pleasures and advantages of a rich man's life which the ignorant poor admire are fictitious—hollow bubbles which dissipate into nothingness under the slightest shock of scrutiny. Yet how few understand it!

The man that becomes powerful by gaining a high place is no better off than the wealthy-powerful man. He too adds unnecessary cares to his life; he too diverts most of his energies into fruitless channels leaving very little for the development of his soul; he too becomes a slave—a slave of pride, ambition, jealousy, and other passions! And how is he chained by the trivial formalities imposed on him by his exalted position! Can we call a man powerful who is thus tied by numerous fetters? The man of high position cannot express his thoughts as he pleases; cannot laugh or weep whenever he has an inclination to do so; cannot even enjoy God's sun-shine and air whenever he desires. The conventionalities of his life, his fanciful duties, and his artificial notions of

behaviour hamper him on all sides ! Notwithstanding his high place, notwithstanding his many high-sounding titles, what a dwarf is he in his soul !

The tyrant who subjugates a vast dominion and brings slaves bound to his chariot-wheels has a Damocle's sword hanging over his head ! He is afraid of everybody ; he cannot trust even his own relations, nay, even his own children. The fear of dagger and poison takes away the ease of his mind. Can we call a man powerful who maintains his position in perpetual fear ? By reducing others to slavery, the tyrant reduces himself to a state worse than theirs.

And the man whose power is based upon popularity—upon the good opinions of the multitude—has but a shadow of power. True power is denied as much to him as to those we have just mentioned. The poet who lives by singing to the people ; the musician who shows his musical skill before the applauding crowd ; the journalist whose writings are read every morning by thousands ; the statesman-orator who rules over the senate by his eloquence ; the worldly-charitable man who distributes his wealth to be respectfully spoken of by the people ; all these possess power of some sort or other, but power hanging upon gossamer threads—power which may disappear any moment and leave them in a miserable state. Those who care for the opinions of the people are not masters but slaves. Their strength and happiness depend upon the capricious ebb and flow of popular favour. No wise man seeks for popularity, though popularity

may follow in his footsteps for his wise conduct. No sooner does he begin to court popularity than his wisdom departs from him. Thence-forward instead of guiding the people, he lets himself be guided by the people. Slowly he loses sound judgment and self-control which are the characteristics of a well-balanced mind. When self-control is gone, his mind, like a ship without rudder, is tossed by the ups and downs of external circumstances. If he gains the good opinion of those whom he tries to please, he is happy ; but if they show signs of disfavour, he is plunged into misery. Is it true power to be thus dependent for one's peace and happiness on the mercy of others ?

We see, therefore, that he who derives his power from any external source, such as wealth, rank, dominion, popularity, etc., gains no true power, but only a semblance of it. Even if he gains any advantage, that advantage is more than compensated by the concomitant disadvantages. Still almost every man is eagerly bent upon attaining power by this fruitless method, which alas ! never quenches the thirst of his heart !

Thus we have seen that the fear of death or the love of life, the love of pleasure, and the love of power are the three principal characteristics of human nature. Impelled by longings for life, pleasure, and power, man spends his whole life in pursuing chimeras ! Despite his care of his body, despite his use of medicines that keep off diseases and prolong life, despite his eager pursuit of pleasure by the gratification of the senses and the intellect,



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despite his infatuate struggles for the attainment of power by bringing his fellow-men under his direct or indirect control, neither can he conquer death, nor can he get any abiding satisfaction of his heart, nor can he become truly strong and powerful. If a man be wise, if he be really careful of his own interests, he will surely learn lessons from these failures; he will gratefully accept and abide by the teachings that God thus indirectly imparts to him.

Our fear of death and love of life, our love of pleasure, and our love of power are but the demands of our nature for the conquest of death and the attainment of eternal life, for the enjoyment of everlasting bliss, and for the possession of a power that will not fade away. We have been gifted with these impulses—the love of life, the love of pleasure, and the love of power—so that we may seek for eternal life, unending joy, and unchanging strength. Till the fear of death is shaken off, till endless bliss is realised, till true power is attained by us, our heart will never receive its full measure of satiety. So it is incessantly urging us to find out that which will enable us to conquer death and be supremely happy and strong.

Now, how to conquer death? How to be really happy in this world where happiness and misery are inseparably mixed up? How to be powerful here, when we see that every acquisition of power subjects us to some form of weakness—some form of slavery? What elixir of life is it that will free us from the fear of death? What fount of joy is it that will not be exhaust-

ed? What power is it that will make us strong and free like the wind which goeth wherever it listeth? Vain it is to seek immortality by Alchemy; vain it is to plunge ourselves into the pleasures of the world for happiness; vain it is to try to be powerful by gaining wealth, honour, and high station in society; still from the depth of our nature, a voice is, as it were, telling us, "Go, seek, and find out the source of immortality, happiness, and power"

I. How to conquer death?

Religion teaches us the secret of conquering death. Death rouses no greater fear in the truly and deeply religious than an ugly mask does in a grown-up man; the distorted features, the horrible appearance, can scare but children. He to whom the teachings of Religion are realised truths, has morally conquered death. He knows full well that he cannot die—he is immortal; death is but a change in a sea of changes—an illusion in this illusory world; that he is unchangeable, unaffected by the ceaseless appearances of making and breaking going on everywhere. Knowing as he does that he is not the body—an aggregate of material particles—he views the future disintegration of it without any concern. A material body must disintegrate—that is its nature, as much as it is the nature of snow to melt before fire, or of darkness to be dissipated by light. Who can change the order of nature? Can we, by our fear and anxiety, stop the flow of the river, or prevent the sea from dashing against its shore? Whatever is born is ordained to

meet with death. The religious man reconciles himself to the order of Nature, which is but the expression of the Divine will. He cannot complain against God's ways.

Religion teaches us that we are not one with our body. Behind our perpetually changing body—body which is born, which grows, which decays and dies; behind even the senses and the intellect which are as much subject to mutation from moment to moment as their gross visible habitation; there is an unchanging principle—our consciousness. Our consciousness, divested of its accidental qualities such as thoughts, feelings, and volitions, which owe their origin to the activity of our mind, is ever the same. Though our daily and hourly mental experiences are manifold and changing, yet our consciousness knows no change; the ever-changing thoughts, feelings, and willings rest upon the permanent back-ground of our consciousness. Our consciousness knows no change, though years roll on, though our childhood passes into youth, and youth into old age. Our consciousness is the same as our self.

Behind the ceaseless changes visible everywhere, behind the motions of the stars and the planets, behind the movements of the great and the small things of this earth, there is an immutable being who has hidden himself with this visible veil of the universe. Nature, by which I mean the sum total of phenomena, is only a vesture which the Supreme Being has thrown on Himself by some mysterious process. Wherever there is consciousness in the universe, know that consciousness

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to be the expression of the presence of the Supreme Being. He is the origin of consciousness—the Infinite Sea of Glory whose gleams are visible everywhere. Man's consciousness, man's Atma, the light that steadily shines in him, is but a manifestation of God. Man's self is but a ripple or a wave in the Infinite Sea of Light.

As man's self is not a principle distinct from the ultimate principle of the universe, as it is but the expression of the Divine Being, it can never die. Man really is eternal, immutable, birthless, and deathless. Weapons cannot pierce him, fire cannot burn him, disease cannot waste him, death cannot touch him in any way. His self lives even when his body stiffens with death and is carried to the grave; his self lives even when his friends forget him and the memory of his deeds is effaced from the earth; his self shall live even when the last vestige of the human race shall have passed away.

This truth of religion is deeply felt by very few. Very few understand the real nature of their self. Very few realise the truth that what they usually regard as their self is but a complex and fictitious idea built up by their thinking themselves to be identical with their bodies, minds, and senses. Let them think deeply, let them exert themselves to understand the supreme truth as much as they exert themselves to master any worldly difficulty, they will be fully convinced that they have their true life in God, and that that life cannot be put out by the hand of death. A religious man,

therefore, always thinks himself different from his body. If he cannot realise at once his oneness with God, he always contemplates that what he usually regards as his self is not his self. Really his self is divine, it cannot die with the dissolution of his body. The more he understands his distinctness from his body, the more his fear of death diminishes; the more he learns to live in God, by leading a pure life, the more he realises that God is his true self; till growing perfectly pure and feeling his unity with God, he achieves a complete victory over death. Then, for him, the sting of death becomes absolutely powerless. He feels, he is immortal, breathing the spirit of the Supreme—one with Him.

## II. How to be happy ?

Happiness is a state of our mind in which we feel a heightening of our being. We can get this state by various methods. All these methods can be classified under three general heads. We can get pleasure, first, by the gratification of our senses; second; by the suitable excitement of our intellectual faculties; third, by the exaltation of our spiritual nature. Though a certain amount of intellectual activity is ever associated with the experiencing of almost every form of pleasure, yet, taking into consideration one aspect or other of our nature that is most concerned in its production, we may call a pleasure, either sensual, or intellectual, or spiritual. So the classification of all forms of pleasure under three heads, *viz.*, sensual, intellectual, and spiritual is a convenient one.

If you think deeply you will find that of all these different forms of pleasure, sensual pleasure is the least durable, though it makes us most dependent on things and circumstances not wholly under our control. The glutton enjoys the sight of dainty dishes ranged on his table, is cheered by tasting them, but soon there is surfeit; then no longer can he find enjoyment in the gratification of his palate. The rich man lies down on his smooth yielding bed to get accustomed to it, and then rolls restlessly on it for want of sweet slumber. The lady of fashion gets after some time disgusted with the most lovely colours in silk and merino. The most beautiful piece of music palls on our ears if repeated several times, and the most delicate odours grow sickening if they are continuously inhaled for a period. Sensual pleasure is fleeting, but to what an abject state of slavery is he reduced who gives himself up to it! To gratify our senses, we must have desirable sights, sounds, tastes, odours, and touches. To get them, we must be dependent upon external things. However much we may be well-placed, we cannot command them as we please. And the more we gratify our senses, the more fastidious in their cravings, the more uncontrollable in their nature, do they grow. So we see the sensual man is always led by his strong desires—desires running in all directions like wild horses in their unrestrained strength to plunge him into an abyss of misery.

And for the little enjoyment the sensualist gets, he pays dearly by the loss of intellectual culture and the

pleasure that comes from it. The man of unrestrained senses can never be highly intellectual. The fine fibres of his intellect wither away owing to the drafting of almost all his energies to the senses. And his spirituality? Sensuality and spirituality are as wide apart as the poles. Can we then call a sensualist a happy man, when he is a slave ever pursuing fleeting pleasure, when he loses the roundness of his intellectual growth, and when spiritual joys are shut out from him?

Intellectual pleasure is better than sensual pleasure. To get it, we need not be so much dependent upon things beyond our control. "A book and a shady nook" can be easily obtained by us, and we feel exquisite delight in communing with great souls through books. The happiness thus obtained, though at a very little cost, is far purer than the pleasure of the sensualist. The sensualist can easily be robbed of the means of sense-gratification, but the intellectual man cannot be robbed in that way of his sources of delight. Even if books be not available, the book of nature is ever open before him. The sunrise and the sunset, the clouds and the stars, the herbs of the earth, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and other objects and phenomena of nature can ever be pleasantly studied and contemplated by him. Who can rob him of these God's gifts?

Though intellectual pleasure is surely much better than sensual pleasure, yet it ceases to be a pure delight when it is pursued in a selfish spirit, when it is not backed by moral culture and suffused by spiritual

thoughts. The selfish vicious man can never labour rightly for the culture of his intellect. He has other aims of life than intellectual development. So he uses his intellect as an instrument for gaining honour, wealth, and other worldly advantages. And he who seeks worldly advantages even through intellectual culture reduces himself, like the sensualist, to slavery. He can never have unalloyed intellectual delight. His intellect refuses to yield him that happiness which the unselfishly intellectual man enjoys.

Thus intellectual pleasure has its defects and limitations. It makes us dependent to some extent upon external things and circumstances, since for gaining it, we must have books and other objects of study. But spiritual pleasure has its source entirely within us; it rises from the development of our spiritual nature. To be good—to be true, just, and merciful,—we need not seek for anything outside; to think of God we need not make ourselves slaves of circumstances. To develop our spiritual nature we have only to give the right bias to our will. Make up your mind that you will be true, just, and merciful to all under all circumstances,—who can deprive you of your holy resolution? Make up your mind that you will be devoted to God, that you will remember Him always,—who can conquer your determination? To attain purity and godliness, you require no man's patronage nor have you to wait for favourable opportunities. Whether you are rich or poor, whether you are in health or ill health, whether there is sunshine



or no sunshine, whether the stars are propitious or evil-eyed, make up your mind now to be holy and godly. you will have entrance into the realm of celestial delights.

Yes, celestial, delights! The joy of leading a pure life, the joy of developing a clean conscience within, the joy of dwelling ever in God, can never be imagined by those who are immersed in worldly pleasures. Can he, who has not seen sunrise from the sea-shore, imagine the splendours put on by the sky and waters at the time of that occurrence? Can he, who has nothing else to drink than the stagnant water of filthy marshes, imagine the sweetness of the sparkling water of an Himalayan torrent? Lead a pure life, learn to live always in God, you will enjoy a blessedness which all the diamonds of this earth cannot purchase, and before which even the pleasures of kings and emperors fade into nothingness. There is a fountain of ambrosia within man's heart. Forgetting it, neglecting it, nay, choking it up, most men are roaming in this world weary and thirsty. All the pleasures of the world can never be compared with the joy of drinking from that fountain. Let a man but cease to give his heart to worldly pleasures, let him struggle to develop in himself an unspotted character, let him learn to live always in God, he will feel a heavenly joy welling up within him! The joy rising from a pure and godly life will never reduce him to slavery, but will make him free for all times. And not only will he himself be supremely happy, but his

happiness will radiate all around, and the world-sick and the sinful will be cheered by the warmth of his company.

### III. How to be powerful.

To be powerful, we need not long for wealth, rank, or world's favour; we have seen the futility of such procedures. They bring weakness under the guise of strength, impose fetters under the name of freedom, and produce sad stunting of life after making golden promises for its expansion. To be powerful, we should turn our gaze within. Within us, in our heart, there is a source of power that can make us stronger than the mightiest monarchs of the earth. It is the power which the wise men of all ages and lands have sought to attain in perfection. You should attain that power—the power that comes from self-conquest.

When our passions are curbed, when vices can no longer creep into our character in any way, when our desires move only in right directions, when our heart cares little for the fleeting shows of the world, but delights perpetually in higher life, in feeling God's benign presence in everything—in ourselves and all things outside ourselves—a power unattainable by any other means, incomparable and indescribable, manifests itself in our souls. That power makes us stronger than the hills in endurance, mightier than the hurricane in active strength.

The source of our powers is in our will. It is by the force of their will that great men achieve all noble

deeds. When a man does not weaken his will by indulging his passions, when he brings his mind under control, a tremendous power gathers in him. Even as a river gathers vast strength in its flow, when the canals draining away its water are dammed, so a self-conquered man becomes immensely powerful by stopping the waste of his physical and mental energies through the indulgence of passions. As he is not led by selfish desires and passions, external circumstances can never overpower him. The words success and failure have no important significations for him. Rather, I should say, he is ever-successful, for he is ever calm and contented. By self-mastery, he masters the whims of Fate. He becomes free, and his freedom cannot be taken by the united potentates of the earth. Such a man is powerful in the true sense of the word. Even kings either fear or doff their crowns before the power of perfect self-conquest. And we see, the greater the conquest a man achieves over himself, the greater the admiration and reverence he elicits from all right-minded persons.

In old days there lived in Greece a philosopher by the name of Diogenes. Diogenes attempted to attain perfect self-control by making himself independent of all external things and circumstances and by cultivating indifference to the opinions of other people. It is said that once Alexander the Great accidentally met with this philosopher as he was seated by the roadside. The indifference with which Diogenes regarded the great

Emperor struck him so much that he entered into conversation with him. Being much impressed by the wisdom of Diogenes, the Emperor expressed his desire to grant him a boon. On coming to know this, Diogenes said, "I do not want anything but that you would stand off from my sunshine." Diogenes was basking in the genial sunshine which the Emperor had obstructed by his presence. The contentment of Diogenes as well as his independent and fearless behaviour so deeply moved the Emperor that he said, "Were I not Alexander, I would be Diogenes." Without telling you to imitate Diogenes in every way, I recommend to you Diogenic self-mastery. It is by living in strict conformity with reason regardless of others' opinions that Diogenes achieved self-conquest.

Most men are guided by others' opinions; they have great deference for the judgments passed on their conduct by other members of society, but they care little for the judgments of their own conscience. So they grow into cowards perpetually babbling about virtues without attempting to possess any of them. They consider themselves great and powerful, without possessing any greatness and power. Though slaves, they dream that they are masters. The rude strength of a Diogenes wakes them up from their delusion. They see before them a man who does not care a straw for those things which they value most—bags of gold, horses and equipage, decorations of rank and office. The self-conquered man, by his mere presence, questions them of

their real worth; his strictly virtuous conduct cries out, as it were, Shame! to them for the hypocrisies of their elegant life. He is a rock of strength whom they can never crush with their vicious energy.

But perfect power consists not merely in self-conquest, but in having over-abounding love. He who is perfectly powerful has not only conquered his passions, is not only indifferent to the pleasures of the world, has not only lifted himself above the world's view of moral life, but the energies of his soul overflow in the form of love for all who are weak and suffering. His love is not like the love of the worldly-minded man, the slave of selfishness, who does good to others in a shopkeeper's way, calculating the benefits that will come back to him from his good deed, but his love flows freely forth out of the abundance of his strength. As the sun gives light and warmth out of the fulness of his store, or as the earth yields the food of man and beasts out of her abundantly fruitful lap, so the truly powerful man, on account of his abundant love, gives to the needy and weak all they want and tries to make them strong like himself.

The worldly-powerful man bursts into anger when he is offended, and shows his power by either openly attacking the offender, or by injuring him by cunningly robbing him of his possessions, or by some such evil way. We see this almost every day. And when he has thus injured a poor weak brother, he boastingly tells the men of his set, "See! I have crushed down that cheeky

upstart who stood against me! See! I have made that fellow houseless and miserable by my ingenuity! Let him learn that it is his duty to be humble before me and men like me!" As if a man becomes a hero by trampling a moth under foot! As if a man becomes highly praiseworthy by robbery or theft! Who cannot kill? Who cannot deform God's creatures? Who cannot mar the happiness and beauty of human lives? But how many can make lovelier and happier the lives of their fellow-men by their power? Is it true power to be wicked or is it despicable weakness—weakness born of slavery to selfishness and the detestable passions springing from it? Let the worldly-powerful man gloat over his power; the wise man shrinks back from such a doubtful possession.

But the godly-powerful man not only bears any injury that is inflicted on him ignorantly or wilfully by any man, but even does good to him in return. As the noble date tree yields but sweet drink to those that inflict wound on it, so the truly powerful man deals kindly even with his enemies. If at times he is constrained to punish the wicked, he punishes them as a father punishes his child, not in a revengeful spirit but in compassion. His power is always for others' good. He knows fully well that all powers come from God; so they should be used in a godly way. As his heart delights always in God, so his thoughts and motives are always holy. As he sees the unity of all men, nay, of all creatures in God, so he ministers unto the happi-

ness of all. His power, like the power of the philosopher's stone, can transmute even the most unrighteous into godly men.

The power of self-conquest and the power of love are the characteristics of all great souls. We read in the Vishnu Purana that when the priests of Hiranyakashipu, after all attempts to kill Prahlada by weapons, fire, the trampling of elephants, and poison had failed, commenced certain unholy rites for his destruction, a terrible fiery form arose from them and went to kill Prahlada. But Prahlada was protected by the armour of faith in God, and so its attempts proved unsuccessful. Failing in its work, the demoniacal form bounded back on the priests themselves and began to burn them in a blazing fire. When Prahlada saw the priests burning, his heart melted with compassion, and so he prayed to God, saying "O Lord! save these priests from destruction! When thrown into fire, I was saved from death by putting my trust in thee, by feeling thy presence everywhere, even in the fire. I see thy presence even in these priests who attempted to kill me. I bear no ill-will towards them; so save them from death." Prahlada's prayer was heard; the priests were saved. The lofty ideal of self-conquest and love presented in this story remains for the guidance of humanity of all ages.

The story of Jesus praying from the cross for the very same Jews that had nailed him there will endure for ever. His utterance, "Father! forgive them for

they know not what they do," will ever edify the hearts of noble and godly men.

In a less barbarous age than that in which Jesus lived, among people more civilised than the cruel jews of his days, when Lord Nityananda, the fellow-labourer of Lord Chaitanya, was wounded by Jagai and Madhai, two notorious drunkards, and his sacred head profusely bled to the sorrow and dismay of his friends and disciples, he did not like the powerful men of the world return injury for injury and punish those infamous men. On the other hand, out of infinite compassion, he embraced them, and implored them to give up their evil habits and taste the joys of holy life. His loving clasp turned those vicious infidels into godly men.

And when our Lord Sri Ramakrishna was abused in the obscenest language by one as licentious and depraved as Jagai and Madhai, and almost all his disciples smarted under the insult, did he curse the detestable man in dreadful language? Or did he even wish any evil to him? O no! his blessed lips were incapable of pronouncing any curse! His blessed heart was incapable of harbouring any idea of evil! Despite the unwillingness of most of his followers, he went himself to the house of the vicious man to instruct him, inspire him, bless him, and buy him with his unselfish abundant love for evermore.

Such great masters are the truly powerful of the earth. Let us have as much we can of their power of self-conquest and their power of love. But let it not



also be forgotten that perfect self-mastery and perfect love can be attained by him alone who lives in God, whose heart is abstracted from the world and its pleasures, and who rejoices ever in godly life. Let us, therefore, live in God from whom come all our powers and by knowing whom we grow perfect in virtuous life.

From what I have said, you can make out that there is a force in man impelling him always towards goodness. However much he may plunge himself into vice, that force always tries to extricate him out of it. Throughout his life, through youth and old age, it is active in pulling him upwards. That force is the force of his soul—it is the power of God.

Yes, My dear friends, your soul, your divine soul, perpetually utters protests when you get into evil ways. In your love of life, love of pleasure, and love of power, when you walk away from the path of rectitude, when you are fascinated by the pleasures of the world and mix yourself up in the universal struggle for them, and when in the excitement of the struggle, you forget God, forget the high ideals of life, forget the purpose of your existence, even then your soul asserts its power. If you would then but draw your attention from the noise and confusion of your life, and listen, you would hear the WHISPERS OF THE SOUL—whispers which under the influence of passions you do not often heed, but which are continually uttered as craving for eternal life, as hunger for ever-lasting happiness, and as thirst for immutable power. If you try to discern the signification of

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these longings, you will understand that your soul is ever teaching you, "Not in this finite world can you find your desires, but in Infinite Eternal God, the fount of ever-lasting life, unalloyed joy, and immutable power." Seek, then, my friends, that fountain, and drinking deep from it, be immortal, supremely happy, and supremely powerful.

## Monism, Old and New.

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WHENEVER we contemplate the grand and mighty objects or the sublime and glorious phenomena of Nature, our hearts are filled with wonder. Who can, in a meditative mood, gaze upon the mighty ocean and not feel an exquisite feeling of wonder rising in his breast? Its apparently boundless expanse of blue water holding millions of forms of life within; its high waves incessantly breaking against the shore with the sound of thunder; its creeping crawling froth and foam; its angry mood when it is lashed into fury by tempests and its majestic calm on quiet days under the clear blue sky; all these rouse in us a mixed feeling of wonder and awe indescribable in its nature. Or when we go to a primitive forest and look at its magnificent trees which have braved through ages rain, thunder, and storm, and have lived renewing year after year their decayed foliage, and which support on their numerous sturdy branches hundreds of creepers that weave with their intricate stems and copious leaves such a dense canopy of green that it is hardly penetrated by the rays of the sun; when we meet everywhere in that forest with countless species of plants and animals bewildering even to the Botanist and the Zoologist; when we watch even for a while the signs of struggle shown by all those plants

and animals to live, grow, and multiply, and then think of the creative energy that has manifested itself in these living forms, we are struck with a solemn and indescribable sense of wonder. Again, when we travel through a mountainous region and climb many high peaks to see to our surprise still higher peaks before us; when we observe the leaping cataracts and rushing streams; the innumerable varieties of trees, plants, and shrubs that deck the valleys and the slopes of the hills, the strange wild animals that start out of their hiding places or speak of their presence by their cries, the beautiful birds that flutter past us displaying their glorious plumage, the butterflies and other moths whirling like fairies in the sky; when we observe these, our hearts well up with astonishment.

Even sunrise and sunset, the phenomena of daily occurrence, calmly viewed excite in us a sacred feeling of wonder. On a fine morning when the sun is about to rise in the East, what thoughtful man can see unmoved the splendours of the sky? The darkness of the night slowly recedes from the face of the earth; all objects seem waiting in a holy mood to be touched by the first rays of the rising sun: the hills, trees, and the waves of water look eager to catch his sight; the flowers exale fragrance; breezes blow softly; and the birds begin their matin carols. First, the clouds in the eastern sky proclaim his near advent in a joyous glow. Then, suddenly, bars of light, like peaks of the crown of the great god of day, dart across the sky. Then, slowly and

majestically, the Lord of light himself rises above the horizon and gazes with his golden countenance upon expectant world. All things smile with joy, and the heart of him who beholds these sights is filled with a sweet mixed feeling of which wonder forms no inconsiderable element. Or, when we see the sun go down behind the hills clothing them in a fine veil of pure purple, painting the sky in all glowing colours—red, green, indigo, violet, and what not—and mingling with the green of the tree-tops an ineffable golden hue; when all objects bathing in his mellow light are transfigured into new beauty; and again, after he has disappeared below the horizon, and the reign of darkness has, to all appearance, fairly commenced, when, at times, we behold the clouds in the far eastern sky suddenly brighten up with a beautiful glow, do we not feel wonder? No man, unless his emotional nature has been blunted by the corroding cares of the world, can observe the splendours of sunrise and sunset without an exquisite feeling.

Not only do these objects and phenomena of the external world fill us with wonder, but the phenomena of our inner world, the characteristics and changes of our mind, rouse in us no less astonishment. Just think of the power we possess of reviving at our pleasure the images of these sublime and beautiful objects of Nature when they are out of sight, the power by which we can make the past live in the present and the present bring a foretaste of the future; just think of our

powers of memory and imagination, do you not feel wonder? What is this mind of man, what mysterious entity is it that it flies swifter than lightning, wanders in regions which the eyes cannot reach, and takes the measure of the greatest and the smallest things of Nature? Wonderful no doubt are the objects of the physical world; still more wonderful are the powers and the activities of the human mind. Contemplation of both the outer and the inner world fills us with wonder. And this feeling of wonder, according to wise men, is the beginning of Philosophy.

If men of the present age with the thousand distractions of their complex lives are deeply touched by the sight of the magnificent objects and phenomena of Nature, much more must have been affected men of ancient times, especially, the thoughtful amongst them, whose hearts were simple and susceptible of natural beauty and sublimity. Wonder excited in them by natural objects and phenomena must have been boundless. Immense wonder must have roused in their hearts such questions as, What are these objects and sights? Whose works are they? What do they proclaim? As men of the present day seek for the causes, ask for the explanations of the objects and phenomena of Nature, so also did primitive men. Wonder roused in them curiosity as much as it does in modern men. But their simple minds found satisfaction in a simple way. They discovered in the agencies of supernatural beings the causes of the various shifting moods of Nature.

When they observed at daybreak the joyful aspect of the world, they thought it to be the work of the great God who rode in his fiery chariot through the sky. When they suffered from the ravages of a storm, they explained their suffering as due to the ill-will of another god. If they lived in the proximity of a high hill which reared its head in the clouds, and showed joyous and frowning aspects as sunlight gilded or clouds darkened its top, they peopled it with gods, angels, and fairies whose tempers were marked by its changing appearances. Thus probably arose the polytheism of the ancient races of the world.

Impelled by the same curiosity that made them enquire about the nature of the objects and phenomena of the external world and form some sort of satisfactory notions about them, they turned their gaze upon themselves and raised questions about their own nature. What is man? Is he merely the thing that is visible to the eye? Or is there anything invisible, hidden beneath his visible shape, which is his real nature? What is death? Do not dead persons appear to their friends and relations in their dreams? How could this be if they did not survive the dissolution of their bodies in some ordinarily invisible shape? Such must have been the questions frequently rising in their breasts. And in trying to answer these questions, they came to the conclusion that the body of man is not his real nature; his real nature is the soul, an invisible principle dwelling in his body. ~~The soul leaves the body when it is made~~

stark and stiff by the hand of death, and goes to dwell in some distant place whence, at times, it visits this earth and appears to its near and dear ones. However hazy or crude the notion might have been, the distinctness of the soul from the body was found out by almost all the ancient races of the world.

But as days went, as the light of civilisation dawned more on the world, as men became more intellectually developed, they grew dissatisfied with the simple ideas of their primitive ancestors. They started fresh enquiries, began fresh speculations, and arrived at fresh conclusions. Sometimes these conclusions were in harmony with those of their ancestors, sometimes contrary to them. They naturally asked, "Are the supernatural beings—gods, angels, and demons—who dwell in the great objects and control the grand phenomena of the world subject to any supreme power? In this world, we see men subject to their rulers, and those rulers again subject to a chief. Is there any such gradation of rank among these gods, angels, and demons? Or, are these gods, angels, and demons merely imaginary beings—mere names for one Supreme Power ruling over all objects and controlling their movements?" As they thus asked various questions regarding their ancestors' beliefs about supernatural beings ruling over nature, so they did regarding their ideas of the soul. They enquired about the real nature of the soul,—if it had the likeness of the body, or if it were like breath or fire or anything else. They enquired also about the relation-



ship existing between man's soul and the power or powers ruling over the universe. Thus arose various queries and various answers, various speculations and various beliefs among men. With the development of their minds, men began to systematize their knowledge on all subjects. And in course of time, their systematized knowledge about the nature of the universe and the soul came to be called Philosophy.

Though the external world must have excited wonder in the minds of primitive men, as it does excite in the minds of children, and set them enquiring about its real nature, yet when the internal world—the human soul—became the subject of their enquiry, then alone, it may be said, they really launched for truth into the sea of Philosophy. For, is not the invisible inner world—the soul of man—more wonderful than the visible outer world? Is not the outer world revealed through the inner, and so may it not be said that the universe exists for human consciousness? If the consciousness of man be studied, if its real nature be known, there will be no difficulty in understanding the nature of the universe which is known through it. Let me therefore first speak to you on a few of the opinions about the nature of the soul held by some of the ancient

idea of the soul, either by seeing dead persons in dreams, or by observing shadows in water, or by hearing echoes of voices, he thought it to be of the nature of a double. As he knew well the gross visible material body, and as he had no subtleness of intellect to imagine anything better or higher, he must have pictured the soul only in the likeness of the body. But as his intellect developed, he formed higher ideas of the soul by divesting it of material attributes. If we study the history of early Greek thought, we see traces of this materialistic mode of thinking in some of the ancient philosophers, who speak of it either as fire, or as air, or as something more or less material. Though the oldest books of India show that her philosophers very early came by highly developed abstruse notions about the soul, yet the eagerness shown by these philosophers to refute materialism prove that in old days this school of thought must have existed, and probably had a considerable following. As far as we can look back through the dim ages of the past, we see the philosophers of different orthodox schools—the Sankhya, the Naya and Vaishe-shika, and the Vedanta—combating the opinions of the materialists and using all their engines of logic to prove the absurdity of their philosophic stand-point.

What, then, did the materialists of ancient India teach? Have they left any elaborate treatises on their philosophy? We do not come across such treatises; they may have perished or may be lying somewhere unnoticed. What we learn about their views, we gather

either from tradition or from the writings of their antagonists—the followers of the orthodox schools, such as the Sankhya, the Naya, and the Vedanta, etc.

The materialists of ancient India were called the Charvakas or the followers of Charvaka. They are some old stanzas which are frequently quoted as giving in brief what the Charvakas taught; one of these oftener quoted than others is:—

*“Jabajjibet sukham jibed rinam kritva ghritam  
jibed: Bhasmi bhutasya dehasya punaragamanam  
Kutah.”*

“As long as you live, live happily; borrow money from others to eat Ghee (i.e., to live luxuriously); when the body is turned into ashes, it will not come back again.”

The purport of this is, that you should live for happiness—try to be happy by any means; if you have no money to purchase things conducive to your happiness with, borrow it from others without any thought of returning it; do not fear that there is any future life in which every man is rewarded for his good deeds or punished for his sins; the soul of man is not a principle distinct from his body, but his body is his soul, and so all anxieties about the welfare of the soul after death are absolutely useless.

To me it appears that the Charvakas could not have taught all that is implied in this stanza, but that there is in it some amount of caricature of their views. I think the Charvakas were intelligent enough to

understand the fallacy of teaching men to borrow money for the purpose of living luxuriously, without any idea of returning it. For, if all persons were to act on this principle, if the practice of borrowing without any thought of repayment were to become universal, none would be found to give on loan. In society, dishonest men can borrow without the idea of paying back, because there are honest men who borrow under difficulties, and pay back scrupulously when good times return. Dishonesty lives, because honesty exists. Therefore, it seems to me that the Charvakas, whose views great philosophers did not deem it beneath their dignity to refute, could not have taught this foolish doctrine. But they taught what the second half of the stanza implies, that the soul of man is not a principle different from his body; his mortal body in his soul, and so all speculations about the future life are fruitless.

The Charvakas regarded consciousness, which is the same as man's soul or self, as an effect originating in the union of material elements. They taught that when air, water, earth, and fire combine together in a definite manner, consciousness arises as an adventitious quality in the same way as brown colour arises out of the union of lime water and powdered turmeric. Lime water is transparent, turmeric is yellow, but when they are brought together, a new colour, brown, is produced. Or, to give another of their examples, when rice and water are mixed together and allowed to ferment, an intoxicating liquid is produced, though rice and water by themselves

are quite innocuous. Numerous examples from our present-day knowledge can be adduced to illustrate this opinion of the Charvakas. Oxygen and hydrogen produce by their combination water, which is different in property from their constituent elements. A mixture of chlorate of potash and sugar, both solid and harmless, when brought in contact with few drops of sulphuric acid, a viscous liquid, gives rise to fire.

The Sankhya philosophers, who believed consciousness to be the nature of an immaterial principle called Pūrūsha or Atma dwelling in the body, refuted the views of the Charvakas in the following way :

It is admitted by all philosophers that the nature of an effect is determined by its cause or causes. No characteristics can appear in an effect which do not exist in its cause or causes. In fact, a cause expresses its own nature in the form of an effect; the effect before it has shown itself lies hidden, in a latent state, in the cause. To give examples. Suppose you see a figure in bas-relief on stone. The figure is an effect. The block of stone on which the figure is visible contained it in an unmanifest state. Just think of the manner in which the figure has been produced. The artist came, outlined the figure on the block of stone, and then chiselled off slowly those parts of it which he considered as useless, and so the figure came out prominently before our eyes. Did the chisel of the artist actually create the figure on stone? The figure existed in the stone in a latent state; the cunning of

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artist's hand simply brought it out. Or, suppose you see a beautiful carpet. You may like very much its lovely diversified colour. But on looking closely into the texture of the carpet, you will find that its strikingly attractive colour has been produced by the use of various coloured threads in its manufacture. Only those colours are noticeable in the carpet which have been used in the warp and the woof; other colours are entirely absent from it. This proves beyond doubt that every effect lies latent in its cause or causes. You Charvakas think that the brown colour produced by the union of lime water and turmeric is a newly generated quality. Brown colour cannot be produced by bringing together any liquid and any yellow substance, say, by mixing pure water and saffron. Does that not prove that the brown colour existed potentially either in lime or in turmeric? And the same may be said of the intoxicating property of wine generated by the fermentation of rice and water. You cannot produce an intoxicating drink by mixing together sand and water. The power of producing intoxication exists in an unmanifest state in rice; by fermentation it becomes only manifest.

If you Charvakas admit (so the Sankhya philosophers argued) that every effect brings out what already exists in an unmanifest state in its cause, you cannot but admit also that consciousness noticeable in the material aggregate of a living body must be the characteristics of its constituent particles. And since regard-

ing the power of evolving consciousness, no essential difference between the several elements that go to form a living body is known, you shall have to admit also that all the particles of all the constituent elements of such a body are characterised by consciousness. But do you actually observe so? You do not. For, what is death? How does the body of a man when dead differ from his body when he was alive. The same frame remains though it is cold; the same limbs are noticed, though they are stiff; the same eyes are seen though no light beams out from them; the same face is observed, though it expresses no longer any emotions. What is it that brings about these changes? Why is there no consciousness though the material particles, which according to you are its causes, exist as before? Even if we do not take into consideration these facts associated with death; even if we grant for argument's sake that death is a mysterious change by which the conflagration called consciousness produced by the union of material particles, is somehow put out; how, O Charvakas! will you explain the continuity of consciousness during the whole lifetime of an individual? For, if according to you, the material particles constituting an individual's body are all characterised by consciousness; if consciousness resides in every one of them so that all of them unite to give rise to consciousness in full blaze; we ask, how during the lifetime of any individual these conscious particles do not neutralise one other's action in such a manner as

to bring about unconsciousness. When an object is pulled by five strong men in one, and by five other equally strong men in the opposite direction, does the object move? It remains where it is. Even so, when half the conscious particles shall act one way and the other half, the opposite way, then instead of consciousness, there will be unconsciousness. But no causeless unexpected suspension of consciousness, no sudden extinction of the light of self, is observed in any individual during his lifetime. We see that when men are gathered together in a council, there is seldom unanimity of opinion among them. In the same manner, we cannot expect that the hypothetical conscious particles of any individual's body will always act in the same direction; but we can expect frequent interruptions of their activities owing to the conflict of their divided and opposite tendencies. But human life shows no such breaks in consciousness; on the other hand, consciousness is its most unchanging characteristic.

Observe again, man's body is ever changing;—the body of childhood is not the body of youth, nor is the body of youth, the body of old age. But the consciousness of man, his self, remains the same throughout his life. In old age, he can review his past life, bring back to his mind the innocent days of childhood, the joyous experiences of youth, though no vestiges of the tender limbs of childhood and the rounded muscles of youth remain in his feeble and withered frame. If consciousness were a product of the union of material particles, could it remain



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the same when those material particles which generated it have been renewed several times ? Could consciousness of a man assert its unity through such words of his as, "I was a child once, I became, in time, a youth, and now in old age, I am on the brink of the grave." So, O Charvakas! you are wrong in supposing consciousness to be the effect of the combination of material particles. It is a common maxim of all logicians that when, by admitting the existence of a single cause we can explain any fact, there is no need for us to admit the existence of a multiplicity of causes. So if the fact, consciousness, can be satisfactorily explained by admitting the presence of a principle, a source of consciousness, called Atma, distinct from the body, there is no necessity for you to get into the mire of illogical reasoning by imagining the existence of innumerable conscious particles in the body.

Thus and in other ways did the Sankhya philosophers argue against the Charvakas, the materialists. The latter part of their reasoning reminds us of a fact which modern scientists have declared to be mysterious. Modern science has shown that the human body is made up of innumerable living cells. Each cell is instinct with consciousness—it grows, multiplies, and dies. But how comes the sense of personality of man ? There are innumerable living cells in my body. Joys, sorrows, and many other emotions, various sensations, thoughts, and volitions, are incessantly rising and disappearing within me ; but how these mental states, these mental phenomena, are referred to me as their centre ? They

all belong to me; their diversity and distinctness are harmonised by me? Is not this sense of personality a mystery?

The Sankhya Philosophers regarded the self or Atma as a principle distinct from the body. The followers of the systems of Naya and Vaisheshika, though refuting the Charvakas in their own way, agreed with the Sankhya philosophers on this point. But the followers of the Naya and Vaisheshika Schools held that though consciousness and the contents of consciousness such as joys, sorrows, memory, feeling of effort, etc., arise in Atma, and as such may be considered as its accidental traits, yet neither consciousness nor the contents of consciousness are its real characteristics. For, consciousness, according to the followers of these schools, is not the very nature of Atma, but is an adventitious quality generated in it on certain suitable occasions. These philosophers say that when Atma unites itself with the mind, and the mind connects itself with any of the senses (Indriyas), and that sense in its turn comes in contact with an external object, the union of these gives rise to consciousness in Atma. Atma is spoken of as the seat of consciousness, because consciousness is referred to it, though consciousness is not its very nature.

To make the views of these philosophers clear, let me briefly explain to you their psychological stand-point.

According to these and other Indian philosophers, the various activities of the human body are due to the activities of the senses or Indriyas. By the word Indriyas,

they did not mean sense-organs, such as eyes, ears, tongue, epidermis, etc., but they meant some invisible and subtle material substances placed behind these organs and functioning through them. These philosophers had observed the fact that a particular sense-organ of a man may be all right, yet he may not be able to receive any sensation through that organ. For instance, both the eye-balls of a man may be well-shaped, yet he may be blind, or both his ears may not have suffered any injury, yet he may be deaf. In these cases, blindness and deafness, they could explain only as due to the defects of the true senses—the fine material substances located behind the organs. They concluded therefore, that the true senses or Indriyas are different from the visible sense-organs.

Let me also tell you that according to these philosophers the mind is not the same as Atma or the self, but it is a subtle material principle acting as an intermediary between the senses and the self. The material nature of the mind was found out by these philosophers from the observation of the action of material objects upon it. Food, drink, alcohol, and drugs affect the mind either beneficially or injuriously. If the mind were not material, it could not be affected by them. And their reason for regarding the mind as intermediary between the senses and the self was this. We see that though our senses are always open like gate-ways, though our self or Atma is ever present, yet, there is no crowding of sensations within us; but there reign order

and harmony in our sensations, ideas, and thoughts. This order and harmony is due to our mind's allowing only one sensation to rise in us at a time. The particular sense to which our mind attaches itself brings in a report from the outside world,—it causes a sensation. No sensation can rise in us, unless we are attentive, *i. e.*, unless our mind attaches itself to a particular sense and allows it to bring its message to our self. Our mind thus prevents the rushing-in of the crowd of impressions from the outside world. It is like a gate-keeper who opens only one door at a time of a many-doored chamber to allow one by one all enterers, and thus keeps strict order in it.

It may be said against this view of the nature of the mind that we often see, a musician plays upon a musical instrument and hears at the same time the music produced by his skill. Here two sensations, one of touch and the other of sound, rise simultaneously in the musician. In reply, our ancient philosophers would have said, this rise of two sensations at the same time is only apparent—it is an illusion. As by swinging round and round a piece of glowing charcoal we produce the appearance of a continuous circular line of fire, (the charcoal can never occupy all points of the circular line at once, yet it appears to do so,) even so, the mind attaches itself to different senses one after another so, quickly that one falls into the illusion that these senses are causing sensations at the same time.

Now you can understand the view of the followers of the Naya and Vaiseshika Schools. They taught that when union is established between Atma, mind, any of the senses, and the objective world, there arises a sensation—a form of consciousness. A more or less similar account of the genesis of sensation is given by other orthodox Indian philosophers of old, such as the Sankhyas etc., but the peculiarity of the Naya and Vaiseshika Schools lies in their doctrine of the unconscious nature of the spirit and the phenomenal nature of consciousness. The unconscious spirit or Atma, according to them, becomes conscious when a report from the outside world is brought to it by any of the senses and the mind! They held also that Atma is the source of all activities; whenever we act, the effort needed for the performance of the action is put forth by our Atma, and so Atma it is the real agent.

These peculiar doctrines of the followers of the Naya and Vaiseshika schools were contested by the Sankhya philosophers.

If you assert, (so the Sankhya philosophers may be said to have remarked) that consciousness is not the very nature of the self, but an adventitious quality generated in it by the union of itself, mind, any sense, and any external object, do you not commit the same fallacy as was committed by the Charvakas (the materialists). How can four unconscious entities by the simple act of union give rise to consciousness? Can sand, stone, brick, and iron ground together give

rise to oil? If oil do not exist in any of the ingredients, how can you get it by bringing them together? The Charvakas failed to prove the genesis of consciousness from the combination of millions of material particles. You are trying to do the same thing after merely diminishing the number of elements. If consciousness be not the characteristic of the self or Atma, you cannot by any metaphysical magic show its origination by establishing connections between the self, the mind, any of the senses, and the objective world. Unconscious objects ever remain unconscious, unless consciousness ~~is~~ induced into them by a conscious principle; as dark objects ever remain dark unless illuminated by a luminous body. And you regard Atma as the real agent in all our actions. Is not every kind of activity a change? Can we conceive of change, unless in connection with objects existing in space? Such objects are necessarily finite and composed of parts. They are transient; for their parts disintegrate some time or other. If you think Atma to be active, you cannot but admit that it is changeable, finite, and composite, and as such liable to dissolution. But the immortality or the indestructible nature of Atma is declared by the Vedas. Would you then, O ye followers of Naya and Vaiseshika systems, believing in the mortality of Atma, deny the authority of the Vedas, and go over to the infidel camp of the Charvakas?

It is needless to say that the infallibility of the Vedas and the immortality of Atma are doctrines accepted

by all orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. The Charvakas and some others did not believe them. So the Sankhya philosophers did not consider the views of the Naya and Vaisheshika schools on the nature of Atma logically tenable. The Sankhyas regarded Atma or Purusha (as they called it) as conscious by its own nature—consciousness never departs from it.

According to the Sankhyas, human nature has two principles; one passive and the other active; one the seer and the other seen; one standing as a witness and the other displaying all kinds of objects and phenomena before it. The first is Purusha, and the second, Prakriti. Purusha is man's self. It is unchangeable and conscious by its own nature, and views at all times various changes displayed by Prakriti. Prakriti is the mother of all material objects, and is ceaselessly changing. Prakriti has evolved out of itself the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth, and all objects on earth. The mountains, the seas, and the forests are its creations. The human bodies, the bodies of gods and other invisible beings, and the bodies of lower animals have been generated by it. The senses of man as well as the senses of other creatures, the mind of man as well as the minds of other living beings have also been produced by it. Though unconscious by nature, yet it is ever active. This activity of Prakriti is due to its proximity to Purusha. Just as iron filings move in the presence of a magnet, even so Prakriti moves in the presence of Purusha.

Place a magnet on a table and cover it with a piece of cardboard. Now sprinkle the cardboard over with fine iron filings, and then gently tap it. You will see the iron filings move and arrange themselves in beautiful clusters. Have these iron filings life that they thus move and arrange themselves? No. They move as if with a purpose, because a new power is induced into them by the magnet. The magnet does not move nor does it stretch out any tools to draw the iron filings to group them into clusters; no change takes place in it; yet, by its mere presence, it causes change in the iron filings. Even so, Purusha, without undergoing change, induces in Prakriti a power to evolve out of itself this vast and varied universe with its countless objects, great and small. Prakriti has three constituents—\*Satwam, Rajas and Tamas—with which it builds every object of the universe. Though these constituents are present in varying proportions in different objects,

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\* It should be noted here that the word constituent does not accurately express what the Sankhya philosophers meant, when they said Prakriti is Trigunatmika (of triple nature). Prakriti, according to these philosophers, is not composed of Satwam, Rajas, and Tamas, in the same way as water is composed of Oxygen and Hydrogen. Oxygen and Hydrogen are separable, whereas the constituents of Prakriti are inseparable. The Sankhya philosophers taught that before the evolution of the ordered universe, the triune Prakriti was in a state of rest; with the disturbance of its equilibrium, commenced the evolution of the ordered universe. Now Prakriti is not in a state of rest; it is always changing, and so we observe ceaseless changes—creation and dissolution—going on everywhere. And its triple nature is expressing itself through all objects, as lightness, heaviness, and motion, through all minds as happiness, misery, and dulness, or as calmness, passion, and delusion.



yet there is nothing in the universe into the composition of which they do not enter.

I have told you that the mind or intellect of man is evolved by Prakriti. When an object of the external world impresses itself on any of the senses of a person, that sense undergoes a change. The report of this change is sent by Manas (the organ of attention) to his Budhi (Intellect). Then the intellect in its turn changes,—there rises in it as it were a wave corresponding to the impression of the external object. Or to use the figurative language of the Sankhya philosophers, the intellect assumes the shape of the object which has impressed itself on it. And at that moment, the intellect flashes up with the light of Purusha. Light or consciousness, the characteristic of Purusha, is reflected in the intellect. As when the light of the sun falls upon a crystal, it becomes resplendent with that light, so the intellect becomes luminous with the light of Purusha. The consciousness of the intellect, like the light of the moon, is a borrowed quality. The sun is primarily luminous, but the moon, secondarily. So the intellect or mind of man becomes instinct with consciousness, because it catches the light of Purusha or Atma. When in this way, the intellect reflects the light of Purusha, there arises the perception of the object outside. Thus did the Sankhya philosophers describe the process of perception.

They taught also that when such changes due to the impressions of objects of the outer world take

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place in the mind of man, not only are those objects perceived by him, not only do joys, sorrows, and other feelings originate in his mind as the accompaniments of such perceptions, but there arises an illusion which becomes the cause of his bondage—the source of all his miseries. The man in whom arise the perceptions of the objects of the external world, and the feelings of joy, sorrow, etc., considers these perceptions and feelings as his own. Though sensations, joy and sorrow, are due to the changes of his mind; though in the generation of them his self has no active part; though his mind is distinct from his self, yet, identifying himself with his mind, he regards himself as the real perceiver, regards himself as joyous and sorrowful. As a man, who is not carefully observant, seeing a crystal in which the light from a coloured object, such as the blossom of a rose, has fallen, thinks it to be really red though it is transparent; so an ordinary man, incapable of distinguishing his self from his mind ascribes in error to himself the characteristics of his mind. Or to vary the illustration. As a man that does not know the properties of various forms of mirror may wrongly suppose his face to have grown ugly if he looks at it in a defective mirror (say, a concave or a convex), so an ignorant man, who perceives the various objects of the world and in whom various feelings arise, forms wrong notions about his self because he views himself through the medium of his own mind, and cannot discriminate between the characteristics of his mind and those of his self.

If we bear in mind that almost every moment of our life, sensations arise in us, that sensations give rise to ideas, and ideas to thoughts, and that all these disappear leaving behind in the substance of the mind, some traces of their activity, some images, which revive in the form of memory; if we remember that even our sleep is often disturbed by dreams produced by the springing up of these images into consciousness; we can understand the universal nature of this illusion. Our mind is ceaselessly active, ceaselessly changing; streams of stimuli from the external world are pouring into it through the senses; even when the senses are shut, the images of our perceptions revive in it at or against our will, and all these mental changes, all these sights, are displayed before Purusha or Atma; will not any man under such circumstances, erroneously think himself to be identical with his mind, nay, even with his senses and his body, and say, "I am joyous or sorrowful, I am strong or weak, I am hungry or fed"? And when under the influence of joy or sorrow, of hunger or thirst, or of any other feeling, he acts, brings the powers of his senses into play, and receives thereby fresh sensations, thinks fresh thoughts, and feels fresh feelings, will not his false view of his self—that his self or Purusha feels, acts, and changes—get strengthened?

The Sankhya philosophers, personifying Prakriti as a female, say that she, the mother of all visible and invisible material objects, is ever moving, ever showing her charms to Purusha. Her beauty is seen in the

glorious face of the moon, in the blue vault of heaven, in the brilliant stars, in the pearly dew-drops of the morning and the flaming clouds of the closing day. Her loveliness shines through fair faces. Her endearments for Purusha are expressed through the pleasant sensations, thoughts, and images of man, through his numerous exalting delights and happy moods; her petulances, through his unpleasant experiences and fancies, through his many depressing sorrows; the facts of the inner world being as much her creations as the facts of the outer world. By thus perpetually displaying her charms, she is causing the bondage of Purusha. Blessed is the man that understands her nature and is not caught in her snares; blessed is he who realises that Purusha, the self of man, is not really touched by the changes of Prakriti! In the case of such a man, sensations and ideas, thoughts and fancies, joys and sorrows, do not cause bondage. He has freed himself from all illusions; he has discovered the truth—the distinctness of Purusha from Prakriti. He is never disturbed by the changes of this world, for he has drunk from the fountain of true knowledge. He is indifferent to the ever-changing spectacles of the universe. He has neither attachment nor aversion for anything. Though he lives and moves in this world, he is not of it. With infinite self-possession, unbounded calmness, he lives like a god on earth.

From what I have said it may be apparent to you that the philosophical stand-point of the Sankhyas is in

advance of the philosophical stand-point of the Naya and Vaisheshika schools. These latter taught merely the distinctness of the self or Atma from the body, but the Sankhya philosophers not only inculcated this doctrine of distinctness, but also emphasised in their teaching on the conscious nature of Atma. Again, the Naya and Vaisheshika philosophers taught that the actions of an individual have their root in his Atma; the efforts required for performing them being felt in it. The Sankhya philosophers regarded them as originating in his mind, one of the products of Prakriti. The Naya and Vaisheshika philosophers thought joys, sorrows, and many other inner experiences to be the characteristics of Atma; the Sankhya philosophers considered Atma unchangeable and unaffected by these experiences, which, according to them, are caused by certain changes of the mind, and through error, referred to Purusha or Atma.

But both the Sankhya philosophers and the philosophers of the Naya and Vaisheshika schools believed in the plurality of Atmas or spirits. There are innumerable living beings in this world. They thought that in each of these living beings there is a distinct Atma. The Atma of one man is not the same as the Atma of another man; the Atma of an animal is not identical with that of a human being. Through the countless creatures of the universe, countless Atmas are shining. Though similar, in being sources and abodes of consciousness, yet they are different. You and I are not one, though

the source and seat of your consciousness is exactly similar to the source and seat of my consciousness.

The Vedanta philosophers considered this view of the Sankhyas short-sighted. They questioned, and argued (it may be so said) with the Sankhya philosophers in the following way :—

How can there be many Atmas in this world? Is it not an accepted doctrine of all orthodox philosophers that Atma is immortal? How can you reconcile the immortality of Atma with its finitude? If you say that there are innumerable Atmas in the universe, then it follows from your words, that all Atmas are finite in their nature. Two similar things cannot but limit each other's nature; we can conceive of them as co-existent only when we imagine some distinguishing line between them. Does that not make them finite? Much more should we say this of many things. Multiplicity can be conceived only as associated with finitude. If you admit that Atmas are finite, then you should admit also that they are mortal; for all finite things are liable to destruction. Finite things can never be eternal. As they are composed of parts, some day or other, their parts must separate, and this separation will bring about their dissolution.

To these objections, the Sankhya philosophers replied: We do not disbelieve the doctrine of the immortality of Atma nor do we hold that Atma is finite in its nature. We believe it to be infinite as much as you do. But what do you understand by infinitude? Is

it not all-pervadingness? We teach that Atma is all-pervading. But can there be not many all-pervading principles existing side by side? In a room there may be many lights, each distinct from others; yet each may fill with its rays the whole of the room—the darkest corners of it may be touched by them. Each light may be said to be all-pervading as regards the room, yet each is different from others. Even so, there may be innumerable Atmas each of which may fill with its presence the whole of the universe.

The Vedānta philosophers may be said to have remarked on these replies of the Sāṅkhyas in the following way:—

You are simply avoiding, O Sāṅkhya philosophers, your difficulties by resorting to an illustration. But your illustration, like a hostile witness, does not support your case; on the other hand, it speaks against you and proves the oneness of Atma. You argue that there may be many lights in a room, all filling it with their rays. But consider a little and say whether these lights are really one or different. We know that all lights are manifestations of the same energy, the same Tejas, that is present everywhere. The sun in the sky above is one manifestation of it, and the light emitted by the gold lamp in the king's palace and that thrown by the clay lamp in the peasant's cottage are other manifestations of it. All lights are one in essence. The light in which a pious man copies a sacred book and that in which a criminal commits forgery are identical in their nature. Even

so, the consciousness seen in a king is not different from that seen in any of his subjects, nor is the consciousness of a saint essentially different from the consciousness of a sinner. The same Atma is present in all. The minds, the groups of senses, and the bodies of different persons are different ; so they seem to have different Atmas. As there is only one atmosphere enveloping our globe, as there is only one sky spreading over our heads, so there is only one Atma which shows its nature, consciousness, through all minds, all senses, and all bodies. That Atma is none other than God. Aye, everywhere God is shining—everywhere He is manifesting His presence. From the minutest animalculæ to the gods, in all He is present. He is present also in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars ; He is at the utmost verge of known space, and even beyond He is.

Yes, my dear friends, Vedanta teaches the oneness of God and the oneness of all lives in God. God is in all of us. Our consciousness is the expression of God's presence ; it is an out-streaming of the Supreme Light !

What a noble teaching it is ! God in us ! God in our bosoms ! God shining through our minds, bodies, and senses ! If we think even for a moment of this fact, our hearts expand with joy. We are one in Him and one with Him ! Our bodies, sense-groups, and minds are different ; they are like so many coloured glasses making the Divine Light appear various, but behind the variety thus created there is the Supreme Unity. The variety is mere seemingness, the Unity is the Truth.



Our ideas and thoughts, our joys and sorrows, our virtues and vices, are no doubt different; they belong to our minds. They have no real connection with our Atma; as the fragrant and the stinking particles have no connection with the atmosphere in which they float and which they apparently make fragrant and stinking. As long as we will think ourselves to be identical with our minds, we shall rely on our ordinary experiences and see ourselves different. As long as we do not fix our gaze on God, we shall not cease to be impressed by our differences. But let our old habits be broken, let the light of our mind be turned inwards, and let the eternal universal presence of the Supreme be sincerely felt, realised, by us, we shall no longer make much of our usual experiences. Then a new knowledge will dawn on us—a new wine will inebriate our soul.

As Vedanta teaches the unity of Atma, the source and origin of consciousness, you may ask: Yes, Atma may be one, but how came different minds, different sense-groups, and different bodies? How came the world which is impressing itself perpetually on them? Does Vedanta then teach Dualism? Does it teach that there are two ultimate principles—the world and God, matter and spirit? If so, how then does Vedanta materially differ from Sankhya philosophy?

Vedanta does not teach that the world (with its different human and other bodies, human and other sense-groups, and human and other minds,) exists by the side of God. Since God is Infinite, how can the world

exist beside Him? The world has only an apparent existence. By a mysterious power, the nature of which our finite intellects cannot comprehend, the Supreme Being has thrown out the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets,—this vast and varied universe with its numberless finite objects. Let us try to make this subject clear by an illustration.

A magician stands in the midst of spectators. He is intently looked at by all of them. Every one of them keenly watches his movements. Not a motion of his hands, not a twinkle of his eyes, escapes their notice. Yet as they gaze, behold! there is no longer any magician, but in his place has appeared an angel. All are filled with an unspeakable wonder. As they continue gazing on the angel in that mood, behold again! the angel is gone, and his place is taken by two human beings ready to engage in combat with sharp shining daggers! They stab each other to the horror of all spectators, and both of them die from the wounds. While the spectators are deeply moved by the sight of their death, lo again! the dead bodies are gone, and in their place, is seen the magician seated in the midst of piles of loveliest flowers. All are delighted to see him, and heartily cheer him again and again.

Now, my friends, can those that observe these feats of the magician understand, by what art he creates these sights? Can they see through the glamour he throws upon them? The illusory appearances—the angel, the men killing themselves in combat, the lovely flowers—

are produced by some mysterious power possessed by him. The spectators call it the power of magic. But the word magic signifies nothing but something incomprehensible to them.

Even so, God, like a great magician, has projected by some incomprehensible power, the vast universe with the stars, the ever-glowing sun, and this earth beautified by hills and dales, forests and seas, and countless other objects. In the midst of these glorious objects and sights lives man—man in whose breast God has implanted a yearning to seek Him and know Him. All these are the creations of His magic—His Maya—His power, the operation of which defies the grasp of man's puny intellect. Who can say how the Infinite has become finite existences? How the Eternal Light has put on a veil of darkness through which it shines in glimmers?

We cannot understand how God has created the universe. But we know, He is, and there is nothing besides Him. There is nothing to limit the glory of His infinitude. All owe their being to Him; all live in Him. He is the Supreme Reality, all things are but semblances put forth by Him. He, the Infinite Eternal One, is appearing as All.

"As fire is one, but, in the universe, it shows itself in many forms, as the fire on the hearth, as the fire on the altar, and as lightning in the clouds, so God, the inmost soul of all, though one, assumes the forms of all objects, and exists also beyond them."

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“As the same air shows itself in various forms, as the vital fluid entering into our lungs, as cool currents generated by waving fans, as soft breezes, and as mighty tempest, so God, the inmost soul of all assumes various forms, and exists also beyond them.”

“As the spider spreads out its web from its body, and then destroys it again, so God projects the universe by Maya, and withdraws it again.”

“He is the reality in all unreal things; He is the consciousness of all conscious beings; though one, yet he fulfills the desires of all; they alone attain eternal happiness who realise Him in their soul.”

Aye, my friends, eternal happiness for which the hearts of all of us consciously or unconsciously yearn can be obtained only by realising our oneness with God. We should learn to abide in Him or there cannot be any rest in our soul.

Thus Vedanta proclaims in thunder-tones the unity of God, the origin and abode of consciousness and the basis of all things appearing in consciousness. All things have existence in and through Him alone.

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I shall now try to show how philosophy at the present day is coming by other routes to almost the same conclusion as was reached by philosophy in ancient times in India.

Modern Science has revealed many facts connected with the conscious life of man which modern Philosophy

should take into account in its search for Truth. The characteristic of old thinkers was to postulate certain ultimate principles and deduce corollaries from them, and show the agreement of these corollaries with the experience of mankind. Thus their method was deductive. They started from the unknown and came down to the known to show, as the known logically followed from the unknown, so the unknown could not but be true. The tendency of the present-day thinkers is quite the reverse. They love to proceed from the known to the unknown, mounting, step by step, from generalisations of facts attested by common experience to higher and higher generalisations, to higher and higher views of Truth, till the highest generalisation, the highest conception of Truth is reached. The method of these is inductive.

It is openly or tacitly held by many persons at the present day that if Philosophy expects the acceptance of her teachings by modern men, nay, even a patient hearing from them, she should not be blind to the facts discovered by modern Science; but on the other hand, she should establish her claims by showing that not only she does not contradict Science, but that she supplements scientific discoveries by opening up a higher view of Truth. Science is satisfied with facts; she incessantly labours amongst them, and is afraid of leaving the solid ground on which they stand, with a view to see them from those regions towards which they point. But Philosophy delights to rise on the

wings of thought to higher points indicated by facts and view them in their beautiful unity hidden from the common gaze.

To understand the views of the modern scientists and the modern philosophers of the West, we should bear in mind that they do not, like the philosophers of ancient India, make any distinction between the mind and the soul. According to Modern Science and Modern Philosophy, the phenomena of consciousness are Mental phenomena, and in studying them we study the soul.

By numerous observations and experiments, modern Science has discovered the intimate connection existing between the phenomena of consciousness and the accompanying changes taking place in the brain and nervous system of every creature, especially, every human being. The mental and cerebral phenomena of men and animals show striking parallelism and proportionality.

First, observe parallelism. Every mental phenomenon is preceded by a corresponding phenomenon in the brain. No thought can rise in me, no feeling can excite me, no volition can incline me to action, without first giving rise to a change in my brain cells. I see before me a watch. Seeing is a mental fact. But, in order that this mental fact may happen, changes must arise in my nerves and brain. As I see the watch, a series of changes take place in me. The light which falls upon the watch bends and enters into my eyes. Behind my eyes there is a network of nerves. Upon

that network the light impinges itself. By the falling of the light, the cells composing the nerves are stimulated—they move. Their movements are then transmitted to my brain. The cells of the brain move in their turn and undergo chemical and other changes. Then, when these changes have taken place in them, there flashes in my mind the consciousness of the watch. Thus changes in the nerves of my eyes and in my brain are followed by the appearance in me of the sensation of light, and by my perception of the object called watch. Not only is this simple perception of the watch by me preceded by changes in my nervous system and brain, but all my ideas, thoughts, feelings, and willings are similarly generated. So, we understand that every mental fact, every phenomenon of consciousness, has for its parallel a complex phenomenon in the brain.

If we closely study our mental phenomena, we find that when we receive any impression from outside, when we perceive any object, or when we feel pleasure or pain on account of such perception, we are more or less in a receptive attitude. In cognition and emotion, our mind is in a comparatively passive state—we either allow the ingress of sensuous impressions to our mind from outside, or ideas and thoughts, pleasure and pain, rise in it without any effort on our part. But when we determine to do, or do anything, our mind is comparatively active. It is no longer merely receptive, but it puts forth its strength, it stretches itself out, as it were,

to re-act upon its perceptions. Corresponding to these mental facts, there are facts in our physical nature. In every sensation, a message from the outside world passes through an afferent nerve to the brain, and in every action, a message is sent from the brain through an efferent nerve to a muscle, which contracts, and thus arises the action.

Then again as various sensations received at different times, various thoughts thought at different moments, various feelings felt on different occasions, are unified and harmonized by the mind, so the different organs of the body as well as their activities are co-ordinated by the brain and nervous system. For instance, when the smell and the lovely colour of a rose reach by different tracks one's brain, one's brain gives an impulse to one's hand to pluck it from the tree on which it has blossomed.

We see, again, that an injury to any part of the brain gives rise to a corresponding injury to the mind. If the top of the brain of a bird be removed, though it does not lose its power of flight, (for if it be thrown into air, it uses its wings and lights on any place), yet its power of initiating any movement goes away. It cannot fly of its own accord from one place to another. This loss of the power of taking an initiative is due to the loss of an important part of its brain. No human being can survive an operation causing so considerable an injury to the brain: but it has been observed that when any part of the brain of a man is impaired even slightly by



disease or by accident, his conscious life undergoes a corresponding change.

Further, we observe that if a man receives a temporary injury to his brain from some cause, such as a heavy blow, he sees dancing lights. If the blow is severe, he becomes unconscious. By affecting his brain with alcohol or drugs, a man affects his mind. The changes brought about by wine or Bhang on a man's consciousness are familiar to us. These and numerous other facts prove the parallelism of mental and cerebral phenomena.

Then, again, we see that in animals intelligence is proportional to the development of the brain. The larger the size, the more numerous the convolutions of the brain of an animal, the greater is its intelligence. This rule holds good for all animals, from the highest to the lowest, without exception. Again, among human beings, we find that those races that have large facial angles bespeaking high development of the brain are generally more intelligent than those that have small facial angles. Further, the brain of a child is undeveloped, its intelligence is also undeveloped. As its brain grows, its intelligence grows. Then again, we see that up to a certain limit, any sensation in us increases in intensity with the increase of the stimulus producing it. Let the vibrations of any sounding body be increased in number, we perceive immediately in its sound a heightened pitch. Sound is a mental phenomenon, yet it increases in intensity owing to the increase of stimulus

on our nerves and brain caused by the quickened movement of the sounding body. These and other facts bear witness to the proportionality of cerebral and mental phenomena and characteristics.

Now, what do these facts—the parallelism and the proportionality of cerebral and mental phenomena and characteristics bear out? Those who are of materialistic trend of mind will say that they prove that mind has no existence apart from the brain. As our mouth pours down saliva, when any food is introduced into it, as our stomach exudes an acid fluid, when any digestible matter falls into it, so when any suitable excitation arises, our brain generates consciousness, generates sensation, thought, feeling, etc. Mind is a fictitious substance invented by imaginative Metaphysicians. Anatomy and Physiology, by bringing out numerous facts contradict this fanciful supposition of Metaphysics.

Plausible though such materialism may appear in the beginning, yet a little examination will disclose its fallacious character. Physiologists may speak of thought as the function of the brain. We need not object to their language so long as they tell us clearly what is meant by this word "Function", and do not give rise to misconceptions by its use. When an organ is acting, its active state is called its function. So the function of the brain means the active state of the brain. Now, how can the active state of the brain, the movements of its constituent cells or molecules give rise to thought? The brain may be likened, to borrow the

illustration of a great psychologist, to an organ. By touching the keys of an organ, musical notes may be produced. In a certain sense, the keys may be said to produce the notes. But how far are the keys instrumental in producing music? If no air be allowed to enter the organ, can the movements of the keys, however swift they may be, evoke music? Even so, because we see that mental phenomena are determined by the movements of brain cells, are we justified in supposing that thought is actually generated by them? Observe again, the movements of brain cells take place in space. The two great fundamental doctrines of Modern Science are the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy. The latter implies that motion is indestructible. Any moving body can impart its motion to another body. Motion can give rise to motion; it cannot be generated by anything else. So, when any brain cells move, their movements give rise to movements in other brain and nerve cells; but can they give rise to that which is not motion? In order to do so, their motion must become extinct, which is impossible. So, if we suppose that the movements of brain cells give rise to thought, then our supposition violates one of the fundamental doctrines of Modern Science.

Motion is spatial—it is perceived in a body existing in space. Mental phenomena are of a different order altogether. They are perceived in time and not in space. Joys and sorrows, thoughts and ideas, desires

and determinations, cannot be made to fill vials and glasses. They are non-spatial. That the non-spatial cannot be produced by the spatial, a little thought can clearly show. The glands in the mouth may throw out saliva, the stomach may secrete digestive juice; in these cases both the producers and the produced exist in space; but the brain and consciousness are not of that nature; the one exists in space, the other has no connection with it. On the other hand, it is through consciousness that the brain, nay, the whole of the material world, is known.

The materialists are sure about the existence of matter; they are not willing to believe in anything besides it. But the idealists, philosophers of another school, deny the existence of matter. They ask, How do you know that there is matter? What is matter? 'There is a table before you. You are very confident of its existence. Think a little and say what you really know about it. You know only certain qualities. You know the brown colour of the table, the hardness of the table, and the single character of the table. These and other qualities of the table your mind has combined into a complex whole, and so has arisen your perception of the table. Now, suppose your eyes were constituted differently from what they are, instead of seeing before you a brown table, you would see a green table, or a table of any other colour. If your muscles and nerves were of steel-hard structure, then the touch of the table would probably appear to you as the

touch of velvet or of any other soft substance. And if your eyes had something naturally pressed into them, instead of seeing one table, you would see two tables in its place. Just press gently with any of your fingers the lower lids of your eyes and see whether you see one or two tables. Because your organs are fashioned in a particular manner, and because you cannot imagine how things would appear if these organs were differently constructed, so you are so very certain of the reality of matter. Your eyes and other organs, your muscles, nerves, and brain, are all material objects. You know really nothing about their nature; you know really nothing about the external world; you know only sensations such as colour, hardness, etc., and these sensations are mental phenomena. You are consciousness—you are a spirit. You as a spiritual being create the objective world. The world is a dream dreamt by your mind. It is folly to explain the mind, the self-evident reality, by matter—a dream, a fiction.

One may justly ask these idealists who hold these views so conflicting with common sense, How do the world and its objects appear the same to different persons? If the world be the creation of the mind, how so many individuals create in the same way? In our common experience, we do not find the creative fancies of two artists ever agree, nor do we find the dreams of two persons show any likeness, how can, then, the world, (which is the same for all of us, otherwise there could not be any exchange of ideas between

individuals), be the creations of many minds?

A little thought will bring home to you the justness of the objection. But the idealists will answer: The world is the creation not of our individual minds, but of an Infinite Mind in which our individual minds live, move, and have their being. The world is a dream or rather a thought of God. As the waves and ripples rising on the surface of the ocean are not different from the ocean, though they seem to have a separate existence when spoken of as the waves and ripples of the ocean, even so our individual spirits have an existence seemingly separate from the Infinite Spirit. Our individual natures are determined by Divine Nature. The sun, the moon, and the stars appear the same to all of us, because they are the creations of the Divine Mind, and because our minds are determined by that Mind, even as the waves and ripples are determined by the infinite ocean on which they rise.

Thus the idealists explain the common experience of mankind—the intelligible nature of the world and its phenomena. Though their philosophical stand-point is unassailable, yet Modern Science is not satisfied with their reasoning. Modern Science asks by what mode of operation the spirit generates matter. The same difficulties seem to stare Modern Science in the face in this supposition as in the supposition that matter generates mind. The facts discovered by modern research, the parallelism and proportionality of cerebral and mental phenomena, call for explanation. No doubt, it is

absurd to overlook the doctrine of the conservation of energy and imagine that consciousness leaps out of the movement of brain cells. Is it not equally absurd to do away rudely with the distinction between thought and objects of thought? Mind alone may be real; but in mind there are two streams of consciousness, the one perceiving and the other perceived; their relationship should be clearly stated. So not satisfied with this spiritual idealism, some of those votaries of Modern Science who have a leaning towards philosophy have put forward an hypothesis to account for the parallelism and the proportionality of cerebral and mental phenomena. As matter cannot be said to have generated mind, nor mind matter, so they think it reasonable to accept the third and the only other possibility, *viz.*, that matter and mind are two aspects of the same reality. As a curved line seen from two opposite sides appears differently as convex and concave; as the same thought may be expressed in two languages in two different ways; even so, the same ultimate principle of the universe is appearing to us as mind and matter. Or to vary the illustration. When a bell rings, the same objective fact appears to our eyes as the clapping of the tongue of the bell against its sides, and to our ears, as dingdong sound; so the same principle, the basis of the universe, is appearing to us as mind and matter. Mind and matter are two manifestations of the same being. Modern scientific philosophers thus put forward this Identity-hypothesis.

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Mark the word hypothesis. Modern Scientific Philosophy cannot call it anything else. For, Modern Science is positive—its business is to study the finite things of the universe. It is satisfied with its work. When it leaves its own sphere and travels in other regions, it advances only with timid steps. Still as its very nature is to seek for Identity in Diversity, it cannot be blind to the grand Identity underlying the two orders of phenomena, mental and material.

Students of philosophy will recognise in this Identity-hypothesis, an echo of the philosophy of Spinoza. Long before the numerous facts of the psychophysical parallelism and proportionality were discovered, Spinoza, who on account of his philosophical tenets was considered as an atheist by some and a God-intoxicated man by others, taught that the ultimate principle of the universe is one: It is God. God, whom Spinoza called in his philosophical language the Infinite Substance, has an infinite number of attributes or rather aspects, of which two alone are known to man. These attributes are extension and intelligence. All finite objects, all material things of the universe, are modes of the attribute of extension; all minds are, in the same way, modes of the attribute of intelligence. According to Spinoza, the finite is unreal, the Infinite alone is real. As undivided space appears divided into squares, triangles, and circles by the drawing of imaginary lines, so the one Infinite Substance seems



broken up into numerous finite existences. All material things, all minds, have their being in God.

This philosophical teaching of Spinoza, which has been put forward in a new guise, strengthened by new arguments, by Modern Scientific Philosophy, is not far from the teaching of Vedanta. Spinoza ascribes to Infinite God two attributes, extension or existence and intelligence—existence pure, free from all qualities which characterise finite things and intelligence divested of all characteristics of finite minds, characteristics that belong to the unreal aspect of their nature. Did not Vedanta, long before Spinoza elaborated his system, teach, Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma, that God is the ultimate reality, that consciousness is His very nature, and that He is infinite?

Though matter and mind, extension or existence and intelligence, are two attributes or rather aspects of the same God, yet He can be described far better in terms signifying spirit than in terms signifying matter. It is better to call Him a Spirit than a Substance. The word "Substance", (though Spinoza has taken care to define it), being always used in connection with material things, often conveys a false idea to the ignorant mind. And when we remember that it is through mind we know matter, that consciousness is the prius, the precondition of all our perceptions, we cannot but regard intelligence or consciousness as nearer to our being than matter or extension. Hence it is but right to speak of God as the Infinite Spirit. So Vedanta

tells us again and again, Jnanam or consciousness is the very nature of God, the infinite basis of the universe.

Remember Spinoza taught that extension or existence and intelligence are two attributes of God as known to man. By this cautious statement, Spinoza showed his deep philosophical insight. For, as God is infinite, who can define His nature? Who can encompass the Infinite with his finite mind? What is man? A tiny creature on the little bubble of this earth floating in the vast ocean of space. Who knows, who can tell, what other creatures, beings of what other make, dwell in other bubbles moving in the immensity around? Who can guess in what other forms the Infinite Being has manifested His nature to them? Cannot God appear in forms other than mind and matter, extension and intelligence?

Just fancy that the rocks and the plants of this earth have suddenly become endowed with intelligence and with the power of expressing their thoughts, without losing their essential characteristics,—the rocks lying motionless, the plants remaining rooted in the ground as they are. Suppose the members of each of these classes are talking among themselves and forming universal judgments of things from their own point of view; what should we learn if we chance to hear their conversation? The rocks, after much discussion among themselves, would probably come to the conclusion and declare that all things are stationary—nothing can grow from within; all things increase in size only by the

addition of matter brought by wind, or rain, or any other external agency. If this conclusion were to come to the knowledge of the plants, how foolish it would appear to them! Do we not, the plants would say, grow from within? But the plants in their turn may fall into the error of thinking that all things must remain rooted in the bosom of the earth—none can so conquer its attraction as to move about. How the animals, should they chance to know it, would laugh at this generalisation of the plants! Would they not say, Look! How we bound from one place to another at our will! Even so, our statements about God, if made without qualifications, would appear ridiculous to higher beings if there be any such anywhere in the universe, and if they happen to know them. How meanly would they think of our philosophy! What low ideas would they form of our boasted intelligence! So right it is to say that the nature of God in its entirety cannot be grasped by our limited intellects; the majesty of the Infinite is too great to be comprehended by man: So one of the Upanishads says:—

*“Yadvacha nabhyuditam yena vagabhyudyate :  
Tadeva Brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupasate.”*

*“Yanmanasa na manute yenahur mano matam :  
Tadeva Brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupasate.” \**

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\* Kenopanishat Kh. I, 3 and 4.

“Know that to be Brahman which speech cannot express, but to which speech owes its power, and not what you worship.” “Know that to be Brahman which mind cannot comprehend, but from which mind derives its power, and not what you worship.”

The nature of God is indefinable. Definition means limitation! Were we to define Him, we should limit His greatness. Whatever we might say about Him, that would give but an imperfect idea of His nature. Inexpressible as He is, silence is His best praise!

Vain as all our efforts would be to describe Him, vain as our attempts would be to know Him in all the fullness of His glory, in all the infinite majesty of His nature, yet, as He alone is, He alone is the Supreme Reality, and all things are but evanescent shadows existing in Him and through Him, let us then, giving up all futile wranglings about His nature, try to feel, if we can, in awful silence, in the depth of our soul, the grand truth, which philosophers and God-intoxicated souls, sages and saints, have variously reiterated to us, that HE DWELLS IN US AND WE ALL DWELL IN HIM!

“*Sarva bhutastham atmanam sarvabhutani  
chatmani : Ikshate yogayuktamta Sarvatra  
samadarshana.*” \*

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\* Srimadbhagavadgita, Ch. VI, 29.

# Cardinal Doctrines of Vedanta.

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VEDANTA teaches that the nature of God is incomprehensible—it can neither be described in words, nor be grasped by the intellect of man. God is infinite; there is nothing higher than Him, nor is there anything besides Him—all things exist in and through Him. How can the Infinite, the Absolute, be comprehended by our mind? Comprehension means differentiation; it presupposes also the existence in our mind of an idea higher than that which is comprehended. When I perceive a flower, I distinguish it from the leaves, the fruits, and other parts of the tree; and I have in my mind a generic idea—the idea of a class of objects called flowers; and so when I perceive the flower, the perception of it fuses with the class-idea existing in my mind. This fusion is nothing but recognition; so I express this fact of recognition by saying, There is a flower before me. Since a similar process, a similar mental synthesis, goes on in us in our every act of cognition, you can well understand that we cannot know God in the same way as we know the objects of the world. As there is nothing besides God to limit the infinitude of His nature, as He is the ultimate principle, as nothing

exists higher than Him, so right it is to regard God as incomprehensible.

Some may be asking within themselves, Is that all that Religion has to say about Divine Nature? If God is unknowable, may we not, then, in easy and respectable agnostic attitude, give up all thoughts of God and plunge ourselves into the pleasures of the world? As our intellects cannot reach the Divine, let it follow its own bias and seek the earthly. Sensual natures may come to such a conclusion as this, but religious natures can never do so. Those that are religiously disposed, notwithstanding the declaration of Reason that God is incomprehensible, will think of Him, and try to realize the relation existing between Him and themselves. For, man is not merely a rational, but also an emotional being. His deep-seated emotions draw Him towards God. His head may be convinced of the incomprehensibility of God, yet His heart will not, on that account, cease to yearn for Him; and till His presence is felt in it, it will never find peace.

Our great Master Sri Ramakrishna used to say: If a man wishes to bathe in the sacred water of the Ganges, does he go to Gangotri, its source, and then plunging into water, float down till he reaches the Bay of Bengal? Or does he get into the river anywhere he likes, and taking a bath, feels refreshed in body as well as in mind? He bathes anywhere in the river, and his necessity is fulfilled. Even so, though we are not able to comprehend God in his infinitude, in the

fulness of His majesty, yet let us, with our finite intellects, understand of Him as much as we can; let us think of Him, even though symbolically, and be filled with joy at the thought of His glory.

Let us see, therefore, what other ideas of God we can glean from Vedanta.

Vedanta teaches, Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Brahma—God is the supreme reality, God's nature is consciousness, God is infinite. Even this declaration of Vedanta does not rouse such a vivid idea of God in the mind as an ordinary religious man loves to possess. Let those, who can, fix their hearts upon this all but colourless idea of God as the Infinite Reality, the Abode and Origin of consciousness, and be satisfied with it, but men of emotion, men whose hearts hunger for worship, hunger for meditation, ask for something more definite, more thinkable. They like to think of God as a Being possessing attributes having a distinct bearing on the visible universe, nay, on their own lives.

What attributes, then, can we ascribe to God without disregarding His infinitude, His majesty?

God has, by some mysterious power the operation of which our finite intellects cannot grasp, put on this vesture of the universe. The Infinite, the One, has hidden Himself behind the multitude of the finite. All the changes, all the ever-shifting scenes of the universe, owe their existence to His power. So, if we find out the common characteristics of all finite things, we can trace them to God as their source, and thus can have

an idea of Him, more attractive and more acceptable to ordinary minds.

In the visible world, we see all things, first, have a beginning, then, enjoy a period of continued existence, and finally, meet with destruction. Birth, life, and death characterise all things of nature, great and small. This table had its origin in the labour of a carpenter, it had its birth; it is existing and fulfilling the purpose for which it was shaped; and in course of time, after it has become old, it will meet with its end—its legs will separate, its board will break into pieces, and all those parts, after passing through various vicissitudes, will return to the bosom of the earth. The sun, the mighty orb of heaven, which has given light and warmth to the denizens of the earth through countless ages, had its birth, probably millions of years ago, as Modern Science says, when it was shaped out of an immense mass of burning vapour rolling round an axis; it is now the life and joy of the earth; but a day will come, when its light will go out, and the vast solar system will be in the grip of profound darkness and deadly cold. And in our own lives, how familiar are we with the phenomena of birth, life, and death! How do our homes ring with laughter and joyous music at the birth of children! How gladly we see them grow into manhood! How sorry we feel, what agonies we suffer, when we are parted from our near and dear ones by Death! Even our joys and sorrows, our whims and desires, come and go; they have their birth, continuance, and end.



Genesis, continuance, and dissolution are visible everywhere in the universe.

Therefore, we shall not be wrong if we connect these universal phenomena with God. A king is described by the marks of royalty. To point him out amidst a crowd of gorgeously dressed courtiers we say, He who has a crown on his head, a sceptre in his hand, and a golden umbrella spread over his head, is the King. In the same way, to impart to ordinary minds the knowledge of God, we say, God is the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe.

*"Yato va imani bhutani jayante yena jatani  
jibanti yat prayantyaubhisamavisanti ..... tad  
Brahma."*

"That from which all things come into existence, that in which all things live after birth, and that to which all things return at the time of their dissolution is God."

The insignia of royalty—the crown, the sceptre, and the umbrella—are not the real characteristics of the king; they are not the traits of his person as are his fair or dark complexion and tall or short stature: They are mere accidental signs of his dignity. Nevertheless, they serve to mark him out from others, and enable us to describe him in an easily intelligible language. So, birth, life, and death are not the characteristics of God; they are the characteristics of the universe; yet these

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\* Taittiriyanishat III, 1.

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phenomena have their root in Him. Without Him, they cannot appear. Hence, we are not wrong in regarding God as the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe. So long as we do not lose sight of what we mean, there is no error or harm in thus speaking of the Infinite in terms borrowed from the sphere of the finite, in depicting the Immutable in language borrowed from the region of the mutable.

But are most minds satisfied with the idea of God as implied by such words as creator, preserver and destroyer?

In most minds, these words, however true and significant they may be, do not rouse a vivid image. The idea of God evoked by them is too faint to satisfy the craving of their hearts. It is too much like a picture in outline; they require something fuller brighter, and more definite.

Not being able to see all the various implications of such an idea of God and their bearings on their lives, they say, True it is that the universe originated in God, that it is sustained by Him, and in the end will revert to Him; but how are we affected by these facts? What difference is there between God and a gigantic blind power producing the incessant flux of changes noticeable everywhere? What benefit do we get by thinking of such a power? How are we freed from our imperfections, lifted from the vileness of our lives into a blessed state, by meditating on His greatness. Tell us something more of God; give us a picture of

Him more vivid, so that we may enshrine it in the temple of our hearts and worship.

The natural desire of most pious minds to form a concrete picture of the Supreme leads them to ascribe to Him other attributes besides those implied by the words, creator, preserver, and destroyer. Let us see what characteristics such minds in all ages and climes have ascribed to the Deity without being oblivious of the glory of His nature.

All things, all changes visible on earth, owe their being to God, the basis and substratum of the universe. Though God, whose very nature is consciousness, has, by some mysterious process, put on the veil of the universe, yet, through the innumerable variety of objects in it, through the living and the non-living of the earth, He shows Himself in glimpses. Consciousness, the very nature of God, is discernable least in non-living bodies, more in such living creatures as animals, most in men; as if the veil which hides God's glory shows various degrees of transparency in its make, and so allows it to shine out more or less.

Man has been regarded as the crown of creation. For, his mind, of purer make and more developed than the minds of lower animals, shows its superiority to theirs, not only by greater intelligence, a richer and more varied consciousness, not only by the unique quality of self-consciousness, but also by another higher trait, *viz.*, moral consciousness. Man alone is conscious of the distinction between good and evil, perfection and

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imperfection, and consciously struggles for the attainment of the one and the avoidance of the other. Morality gives sweetness to man's life; immorality infuses the bitterness of poison into it. Truth, justice, mercy, purity of heart, and other virtues make a man joyous, strong, and free; they enable him to realize the purpose of his life on earth. Falsehood, injustice, cruelty, crookedness of mind, and other vices turn him into a miserable weak slave; they make him fall off from the noble ideals of life. A highly moral life is the only means by which a man can feel the presence of God in his soul; it is only by the leading of such a life that the deep-seated spiritual cravings of his nature are satisfied. Take into consideration also the fact that the education of the human race on earth has been through various vicissitudes all along towards a higher and higher moral life. We see that the majority of men have left behind savagery and entered into a comparatively civilized state; instead of the highly egoistic life in tribes and clans perpetually at war with one another, they are living a more altruistic life in nations and states. Though selfishness and sins of various kinds born of it have not disappeared from earth, yet thoughtful men have come to understand that in higher moral life alone lies the happiness of mankind, and so they are struggling their utmost to bring about those conditions under which such a life can be easily realised. From the observation of all these, do we not feel inclined to conclude that God is showing himself to be a perfectly moral being through

this distinct bias of man's soul towards higher moral life? So, if a man has to form a conception of God from the study of his highest trait, moral consciousness, and the trend of development of his race on earth, he will conceive of Him as a moral ideal—a being in whom dwell in perfection all virtues which give value to human life and which his whole nature consciously or unconsciously longs to attain. Therefore it is quite natural that men say, God is Truth, God is perfectly just, God is love.

Read the literatures of the various religions of the world, listen to the discourses of the teachers of various faiths, or the religious conversations of men of different creeds, you will find this belief in the moral nature of God openly expressed or tacitly acknowledged everywhere, and by everybody. That the soul of the universe is perfectly just is to all men an axiomatic truth. As moral laws are generally regarded as the direct commands of God, the direct expressions of His will, most men cannot but think that God's nature is characterised by perfect morality, and that He requires man to do those things which, on account of their conformity with His nature, He ever loves.

And we can well understand the value of this belief. Whatever a man thinks, he becomes. If a man constantly thinks of God as a moral ideal—a perfect being whose nature he should imitate as much as he can, his whole life acquires a new character. As from day to day, he thinks of God, meditates on the perfection of

His nature, he advances in rapid strides towards the realization of perfection. If through weakness he commits any unrighteous act, he sincerely repents of it, considering it as an instance of rebellion against God; and if by acts of self-restraint and self-denial, if by following truth, justice, temperance, and other moral principles under all circumstances, he advances in moral life, he feels an ineffable joy rising from the closer approximation of his nature to the nature of God.

Highly elevating as this conception of God as the moral ideal is, when any pious man dwells on it in his mind frequently, he comes to love it with intensity. To a pious man, God is the supreme reality; all things of the universe are empty shadows. Unless they excite in him thoughts of God, he can never derive any pleasure from them. He perceives in the order and harmony reigning everywhere in the universe a reflection of God's nature; he sees God's justice and mercy on all his works. As his heart delights in frequently dwelling on the perfection and glory of the Lord, he feels the necessity of expressing his intense love to Him symbolically in the language of human affections. We all know what sweet associations crowd round such words as, father and mother. So a pious man calls God, Father, Mother, or gives Him some other affectionate name. By calling Him so, not only there wells up from the depth of his soul his sincere love to Him, but that love grows in ineffable intensity from the thought that his own finite insignificant love is requited by God's infinite

love to him. Specially he finds this to be true when he calls God, Father or Mother. For, from his earthly experience he knows well of the provident care and the sincere affection of the father, and of the intense selfless love of the mother, and so by calling God, Father or Mother, his pious heart expands with joy, and its love to Him grows greatly in strength.

To some the idea of calling God, Mother, may appear strange, and lead them to the erroneous conclusion that those who do so, necessarily cannot be staunch believers in His unity; though these objectors against the doctrine of the Motherhood of God find nothing objectionable in the doctrine of His Fatherhood. If they do not like the word "Mother", because it calls up by association in their mind of a co-existent Father, the same objection may be urged against their use of the word "Father"; for in the signification of that word too is involved the idea of a co-existent Mother. On account of prejudices, frosted habits of thought, these persons detect motes in others' eyes, though they do not see beams in their own. But wise men regard these words only as symbols to express man's feeling of personal relation to the Highest, his love to God and God's love to him. If those who object to the doctrine of the Motherhood of God bear in mind that, from the highest philosophical point of view, these as well as similar other words are inadequate to express the idea of the Ineffable Infinite; that even our ideas of morality and immorality are derived from human relations; and that to the

Absolute neither morality nor immorality can justly be ascribed; they will never raise any objection against the devotional language of other men.

Many critical persons scent in the calling of God, Father or Mother, a kind of anthropomorphism. No doubt there is a certain form of anthropomorphism in it. It should however be borne in mind that not only the idea of God's Fatherhood or Motherhood, but even the idea of God's moral nature is in some sense anthropomorphic? But should this word anthropomorphism scare thoughtful men? Are not rationalistic men who speak of God as an Inscrutable Power or Force guilty of the same fault? In speaking of God in this way, do they not borrow terms from human experience, and so discover in their language a kind of anthropomorphism? Our ideas of force or power is derived from our feeling of endeavour or resistance, of pull or push, of strain or stress, felt in our muscles. When scientists speak of magnetism as a force drawing iron to magnet, what is the concrete idea awakened in most minds by the word "force"? In most minds, it rouses the picture of invisible strings or other contrivances by which a magnet pulls towards itself pieces of iron. Strictly speaking, no such things are meant by the word "force". That word merely expresses briefly the general statement that when pieces of iron are brought near a magnet, they move towards it. But most men transfer by imagination their own experience of pulling to the magnet. Even so, when rationalistic men talk of God as the Infinite Substance or Force



do they not think of God in images borrowed from human experience? Is this not a kind of anthropomorphism? The limitations of our nature require that we should think of God in symbols derived from human life, talk of Him in human language. So Goethe aptly said, "Man does not know how anthropomorphic he is."

When these habits of thinking of God symbolically, of talking of God as Father or Mother, have taken deep root in their hearts, most persons slide into still greater anthropomorphism, into the habit of forming a more complex symbolical representation of the Infinite God. Their minds require some concrete visual image to fix itself upon at the time of worship. So when they call God Father or Mother, or by any other name, there rises up in their minds some ideal picture of God. In short, they clothe the Formless with form.

Hinduism has recognised this demand of ordinary human nature to have a concrete visual image of God. Though it declares as the ultimate truth the infinitude, the formlessness, and the incomprehensibility of God, yet, with deep insight into the spiritual needs of man it says :

*"Chinmayasyadvitīyasya nishkalasya sarīrinah : \**

*Upasakanam karyartham Brahmano rūpakalpana."*

"For the benefit of worshippers forms are ascribed to God; though God, the abode of consciousness, is one-indivisible, and without a body."

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\* Sri Ramatapaniyopanishat Kh. I. 7.

Forms are ascribed to God. Some like to translate this part of the stanza as "God assumes forms" or more fully, "For the benefit of His devotees, God assumes forms." Accept any of the two translations you like ; it is admitted by all wise men that these forms are the creations of His inscrutable power, Maya ; that they do not fully represent God as He is ; but that, as God is infinite and incomprehensible, He transcends these forms.

Though Hinduism recognises the demand of ordinary minds to image God in symbolical forms, yet it never teaches that all persons should adopt this procedure. It ever says : Let them, who can, meditate on the formless Infinite and satisfy thereby their spiritual hunger.

The followers of some other religions often condemn Hinduism for thus naively supporting anthropomorphism. It is nothing but prejudice that leads them thus to find fault with others' religion while remaining blind to the faults of their own. Let them reflect deeply and discover, whether such expressions as the Heavenly Father, the protecting arm of God, the throne and the footstool of God, etc., and the story of God's dealings with the first progenitors of the human race written in their Scriptures do not disclose highly anthropomorphic conceptions of God ; let them also say whether the traditional representation of God as a man-like being by art appears to them in the same light as an algebrical symbol does, or whether it rouses religious

emotions in them by imparting vividness to somewhat similar images of God existing in their own minds.

It is not anthropomorphism that is condemnable, but the superstition of it.

A miser gazes from day to day on his bags of gold. As time passes, the shining coins in the bags grow more and more attractive to him. After sometime, he becomes so fond of them that he forgets the purpose for which they have been gathered. To increase his hoard, he suffers from thousand miseries. He lives upon the worst food, puts on the meanest dress, and shows implacable hard-heartedness towards his fellow men when they are in need of his help and sympathy. Why does he guard his money and gloat on its sight? Gold and silver coins have value because they are tokens of labour, and because they have purchasing power; they enable men to get the necessities and luxuries of life. Apart from this symbolical value, they have very little worth. But the miser forgets the symbolised and allows the symbol to take its place in his mind. Even so, when men fondly cherish any particular symbol of God and adhere to any particular mode of worship, they often raise the symbol into the position of the symbolised, and thus fall into the most pernicious error of thinking their view of God as the only true view, and their method of worship as the only true method; thus they turn their religion into superstition.

Yes, superstition I say. For, religion broadens a man's mind, leads him to the perception of Truth in all

creeds, whereas superstition narrows his mind and drags him into the grossest errors. It is superstition that begets sectarianism, bigotry, and hatred; religion can never give rise to these evil dispositions. But alas! superstition has struck its root deep and flourishes with vigour in the hearts of most men. Among the Hindus there are some sects, many of whose members blindly believe that the God they worship is the Supreme Lord, and the God or gods whom others adore are either subordinate to Him or false divinities. Again, most of the Christians consider their God as the true God, and the gods of the heathens as negations. The bigoted Mohammedans look on the objects of worship of idolatrous people as devils. Thus from this superstitious view of God and religion arise various discords and dissensions on earth. Though some of the followers of these religions preach in glowing language the glory of universal love, yet, in practice, these very men are found sowing the seeds of hatred and dissension among men and trying to banish peace from earth. The perversity of nature they display is like that of Ghantakarna, the story of whose life I cannot resist the temptation of narrating to you.

In old days there lived a man by the name of Ghantakarna who was very learned and greatly devoted to God. But he loved and worshipped God as the Lord Vishnu, and in his foolish way, thought low of Siva whom some others worshipped. So he frequently used to engage in disputes on doctrinal matters with the

followers of the Saiva cult. Prejudiced as he was against Siva and Siva-worship, these disputes served only to deepen his hatred to Siva and his name. He was good in other respects and worshipped his Lord Vishnu every day with great zeal. God was pleased with his fervent worship, and so, the story says, one day, while he was praying, He appeared to him in the form of Harihara—a figure one half of which looked like Vishnu and the other half like Siva. Ghantakarna was extremely rejoiced at the sight of the Lord, and so eagerly began to worship Him in an elaborate manner. Though God appeared to him in this shape to dispel his ignorance and teach him His essential unity, yet he did not shake off his perverse sectarian feelings. So he poured sacred water on the blue half of the figure which represented Vishnu, decorated it with flowers, and placed fruits and other offerings before it, but he entirely overlooked the other white half which represented Siva and did not show any mark of reverence to it. Thus his worship went on to his satisfaction, but when the time for burning incense came, he met with a difficulty. He thought, if he should burn incense before Vishnu, it could not but be inhaled by Siva also. His heart revolted against the idea of Siva inhaling the fragrance of his offered incense. So he closed with the fingers of his left hand the nostril of the white half of the figure, and set fire to the incense with his right hand. When this extreme mark of aversion to Siva was shown by Ghantakarna, the figure he was worshipping thus

spoke: "O Ghantakarna! To cure thee of thy perversity, to teach thee the unity of my nature, I have appeared before thee in this Harihara shape; yet thou hast not cast off the wickedness of thy heart. From this day, thou shalt suffer much for making difference between a God and a God." Thus saying the figure vanished, and Ghantakarna was struck with fear. Yet as days went, his hatred to Siva grew stronger and stronger; even the very name of Siva uttered by any one before him began to irritate him. The news of Ghantakarna's bigotry got abroad. So all the boys of his village took to shouting "Siva! Siva!" in his hearing, whenever he would pass through the streets. In his anger, he would beat some of the boys, and they in return would pelt stones at him, and shout "Siva! Siva!" at the top of their voices. This would exasperate him still more. Then, to prevent the sound of Siva's name from entering his ears, he adopted a contrivance. He bored holes in his ears and hung from them two pretty big bells. When the boys would shout, "Siva! Siva!" he would shake his head, and try to drown their voices with the sound of the bells of his ears. This was a source of great merriment to the boys, and so they went on teasing him still more. Ghantakarna became like one mad, left his home, and wandered from place to place, followed by crowds of boys who perpetually shouted "Siva! Siva!" after him with their numerous throats, while he incessantly shook his head to drown their voices with the jingle of his ear-bells.

The story may appear absurd and ludicrous to you ; yet the moral of it is eternally true : The man that hates others' object of worship hates his own, and so deserves the condemnation of God and man.

But how many Ghantakarnas are there among us ! How many are there who have not realised the unity of God ! Even now, the bigoted Saivas regard Siva as the Supreme Lord of the universe, and the God or Gods whom others worship as subordinate to him : the bigoted Vaishnavas extol Vishnu above all other Gods ; the sectarian Christians regard their conception of God as the only true conception ; the unenlightened Mohammedans also think in the same manner and boldly express their views. But centuries before Saivism and Vaishnavism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, came into existence, centuries before civilization shed its lustre on the West, in India was declared the eternal truth that God is one, and He is worshipped under different names. It is stated in the Vedas, the oldest of the sacred books of the world, "There is only one ; sages call it variously." And the Lord Krishna has inculcated the same eternal truth in different words in Gita :—

*Ye yatha mam prapadyante tamstathaiva bhajamyaham : Mama vartmanuvartante manushyah partha sarvashah :*

"In whatever ways men may worship me, I satisfy them according to their desires ; all persons, by diverse paths, O Arjuna ! are coming to me ;" and "Those who worship other Gods worship me alone."

So the first cardinal doctrine of Vedanta is the unity of God. Vedanta does not recognise any difference between the God of the Saivas and the God of Vaishnavas. It sees no difference between the God of the Hindus, the God of Jews, the God of the Christians, and the God of the Mohammedans. Our Great Master used to say: The same thing Water is named in different languages by different words, *viz.*, water, aqua, eau, pani, vari, etc.; even so, the same Being is spoken of differently by the followers of different religions. To all men who, under the influence of bigotry, forget that the omniscient God sees into the hearts of men and does not care much for their modes of worship, and so think that the God whom other religionists worship is different from the God whom they adore, this first cardinal doctrine of Vedanta—the unity of God—should be inculcated with reiterated emphasis. For the crookedness of their hearts, this doctrine is the best wholesome remedy. And if this doctrine be practically accepted by all men, much of that ignorance which leads most of them to engage in religious bickerings will disappear from earth. We hope a day will come when men, realising the truth of this doctrine, will see in the crudest anthropomorphic worship of the ignorant the expression of the same longing of the human heart for the Infinite as is indicated by the rapturous devotions of the saint, and so giving up all disputes about God and religion, will in humility lift up their hearts to the Eternal whose ways of dealing with men are ever inscrutable.



I have told you as briefly as I could what Vedanta teaches about the nature of God. What has it to say about the nature of man? about the relationship existing between one man and another? No philosophy is complete unless it gives out its opinions about the nature of man and his relation to his fellow-men.

One of the Upanishads says: "One God dwells in all; He is the inmost self of all." So Vedanta inculcates that God dwells in all human beings. It teaches also that this presence of God in all men should be realised by every individual desirous of spiritual enlightenment. Unity or Identity is the central idea of Vedanta philosophy. So the realisation of Unity should be the object of our spiritual endeavours. Knowledge of Unity alone brings perfection and happiness that knows no end. As long as a man is deluded by the perception of Diversity, as long as he does not allow the supreme idea of Unity to influence his conduct, he is bound to experience thousand miseries in this world. It is the perception of Diversity that leads a man to regard some fellow-men as friends and some others as enemies. It is the perception of Diversity that makes him attached to his friends and averse to his enemies. And his attachment and aversion cannot but disturb the equanimity of his soul. Everlasting peace and undefiled and boundless joy can never come to the man who is swayed by love and hatred, attachment and aversion. Glimpses of happiness he may get from the company and good offices of his friends, but, in this ever-changing world, how long

can such glimpses last? Like meteors they illuminate his life's path only for a few moments to plunge him again into darkness. And his aversion from his enemies, his unpleasant thoughts about them, always mar his even enjoyment of any kind of happiness. So to lift every man above the chances and changes of this world, to make him enjoy everlasting peace, Vedanta teaches him to realise the unity of all men, as they all live the same life in God.

Consciousness, which is the very essence of the nature of man, is the expression of God's presence in him. The consciousness of one man is not different from the consciousness of another man, though the contents of consciousness, the accidents of it, vary in different individuals. My joys and sorrows, my desires and fancies are, no doubt, not identical with those of another man, but these joys and sorrows and other phenomena, seemingly arising in consciousness, do not actually belong to it. They owe their existence to changes in the mind-stuff, and so differ in different individuals. Our minds are different, but that which gives life to our minds, makes them instinct with consciousness, is one in all of us. The prime source of consciousness, the Omnipresent Eternal Light, which makes the changes—the continually rising and vanishing waves and ripples—visible is one. Undivided, infinite, it expresses itself through all men and through all other creatures. This source of consciousness is none other than God.

God is in all of us and we are one in Him. Since this is the truth, is it not our duty to be guided by it in all our actions, in all our dealings with our fellow-men? We should never forget that a man may understand this truth, yet his knowledge will not deserve the name, if it does not influence his conduct. So we should mould our lives in the light of this truth in such a manner as to make every action of ours bear testimony to our having been drenched by its holy influence.

How to make this truth, that God dwells in all men, the ruling principle of our conduct?

The fact of the presence of God in all men raises infinitely the value of every individual's life and places it on a par with the lives of other individuals. In our social life, we are too much in the habit of seeing difference between man and man. The external conditions of life, the different states of development of mind and body, impress us more than the real unity of all men. In the eye of most persons, the rich man appears a being different from the poor man; the high-born, different from the low-born; the intelligent, different from the dull-headed. The habits of noting differences of wealth, differences in the circumstances of birth, and differences in the grades of intelligence have taken such a hold on their minds that they have gradually lost sight of the essential unity underlying these differences. Yet that unity is the reality—it has incomparable value. Wealth, rank, birth, and other accidents of man's life

have no real connection with man's nature. They may be valuable in the eye of the world, yet their worth is as dust in the scales when weighed against man's true nature. Man is divine in essence—this fact outweighs all other facts. So if we do not wish to overlook this fact, we should regard all men as equal, and adopt the principle of Equality as one of the great guiding principles of our lives.

Of all human virtues, on which the moralists of different ages have dwelt with special emphasis and on which the fabric of human society securely rests, the two most important ones are, justice and sympathy. The common saying, "Let heavens fall but justice be established on earth," proves that however imperfectly justice may have been realised in society, this virtue alone produces social stability, and the perfect realisation of it is a desideratum longed for by men. If in any society Injustice reign for some time with unabated strength, if Justice be thrust out and thrown into shade by her evil power, then in that society there bursts forth a Revolution; and the mighty forces sustaining the society vigourously operate to introduce in it a better order and establish again the power and dominion of Justice. Then Justice heals what Injustice wounded; she revives what Injustice mortified; she illuminates with joy what Injustice darkened with sorrow. Peace and thousand other blessings follow in the train of Justice, and men grow rapidly in perfection under her divine rule. So justice is the greatest of

human virtues. Sympathy is only a variation of justice ; it is justice with a higher application. To remove the roughness of human society and add charm and sweetness to it, though sympathy is highly needful, yet its office is supplementary. What Justice begins, Sympathy completes ; Justice builds, Sympathy places the keystone, and gives finish to the social life of man.

Let us examine a little more closely the ideas underlying the conceptions of these two great virtues.

In a just society, every man enjoys freedom to develop his nature toward perfection, provided he does not infringe the equal freedom of other men to do so. In such a society, every individual enjoys certain rights equally with others ; none are allowed to violate them. However low may be the circumstances of any person, in it his rights are as inviolable as the rights of persons placed in the best conditions ; in it his right to live, to labour, to enjoy the fruits of his labour, to express his opinions, and similar other rights are perfectly guarded. As the sun shines equally on all, as rain and dew come down from the heavens for the benefit of all without distinction, so the advantages of a just society are enjoyed equally by all its members. From this you can understand, that the idea of Equality is the principal idea underlying the conception of justice. Vedanta teaches us to act on the principle of Equality ;— it urges on us the necessity of realising perfect justice in our relationship with our fellow-men. We should look equally on all—the rich and the poor, the high and the

low ; we should behave equally towards them. Justice as ordinarily understood by moralists and politicians is a dead idea—it can never expand and grow ; it means only securing to men certain rights. But the securing of these rights to some often mean infringement on the rights of others, which imperfectly just men fail to perceive and prevent. How frequently we find, that in an apparently just society, the poor and weak, in their conflict with the rich and powerful suffer innumerable forms of misery, nay, even go to ruin, for want of interference and help from men who have a narrow view of justice. How frequently we see the poor and weak are deprived of their dues by the cunning rich and powerful, who take care not to break formally the laws of their country. Such instances of injustice, unpunishable by law, are familiar to all of us. Unless men have a higher view of justice, they can never disappear from society. Vedanta vitalizes the conception of justice by basing it on the idea of the Divine in man. As God is in all men, as He manifests Himself through the rich and the poor, through workers with the intellect and workers with the hand, through men of high caste and men of low caste, they are all equal, judged from the highest point of view. Equality with fellow-men is the greatest privilege that every man enjoys for having God in his soul. Let this Vedantic principle of Equality be followed by all men, all forms of injustice, open or veiled, punishable or unpunishable by Law, will no more show themselves amongst us.

Some may say, Does Vedanta inculcate the recognition of absolute equality between man and man? Does not justice mean giving every man his due? If we are to act justly, we cannot shut our eyes to the inequalities of men. The honest labourer who toils from sunrise to sunset should never be classed with the highway robber who roams in the night to attack wayfarers for their property; the saintly man who spends his time in watchful prayer and charitable deeds should never be mentioned in the same breath with the drunkard or the whoremonger. Should we deal equally by them? Should we, in the name of Vedanta, help the robber even as we do the labourer or punish the labourer even as we do the robber? Should we, acting on the Vedantic principle of Equality, court the company of the sot, as we court the company of the God-intoxicated man? If this principle of Equality be followed without reservation, our social structure will surely crumble down in a short time, and in the consequent chaos, vice and misery will hold unrestrained dominion. Distinctions are the creations of Nature; inequalities are visible everywhere on her face. Rivers and oceans preach them with the unevenness of their waves; Earth declares them perpetually with her hills and dales; the heavens themselves, by their divisions of dark ethereal space and shining spheres, proclaim them eternally. As human society is within nature, it is natural that there should be distinction between man and man. It is madness to slight Nature's ways and follow the impractical teaching

of the equality of all men.

Plausible and reasonable though these remarks may at first appear to you, yet a second thought, a closer examination, will reveal to you their one-sided character, and convince you that they present facts in a false and distorted light. It is not true that man should always follow wild Nature's ways. By entering into society, by giving up the self-assertive life of struggle and conflict prevalent everywhere in the animal world, man has taken a new path as regards the development of his nature. Self-conscious social life and the consciousness of the ideals to be realised in it make his life widely different from the life of animals. Nature has manifested a higher power in man—a power that urges him incessantly to give up selfishness and cultivate justice and love, to cast off the brute and make the Divine within shine out in full glory.

No doubt there are inherent distinctions between man and man, no doubt there are other distinctions which their different habits of life have created; no one can either deny or rudely do away with them. The laborious and the lazy, the honest and the dishonest, the saintly and the sinful will always be regarded differently. No sensible man can tell you to behave equally without reservation towards them. Vedanta or any system of philosophy or any religion cannot but recognise the differences existing between them. But if you enquire into the nature of these distinctions which the common sense of mankind support, you will



find them to be such as are created by the free choice and actions of the individuals who are sufferers by them. A rogue is a rogue by his own free will; none have made him so. An honest man rises in popular esteem by his own exertions without restraining others from doing so. A rogue gets from society a treatment different from what an honest man receives. This inequality between him and an honest man, he himself has created—it is the logical effect of his own conduct, the outcome of his self-rebellion. Who can remove it but he himself? Such distinctions, such inequalities of men, Vedanta never teaches us entirely to obliterate, yet, pointing out to us their deeper unity, it tells us to remove their inequalities as far as practicable. Those arbitrary distinctions of men which the selfishness of the powerful has set up, those false partition-walls between man and man which Injustice has reared and preserves, it tells us never to recognise, but to raze to the ground. As its great metaphysical doctrine is that you should realise Unity in Variety, so its ethical doctrine, which follows from it as a corollary, is that you should act on the principle of Equality, notwithstanding the various inequalities of men. This ethical doctrine you can practically follow only by dealing justly and fairly with all persons.

But owing to the imperfect state of society in which we live, our notions of justice are often narrow. Though we try our best to establish just relations between all members of society, yet the almost intractable environ-

ments and also our imperfect notions of justice stand in our way. In society, we come across men who, adhering to the formal rules of justice, violate in various ways its real purpose. The cunning rich man often so arranges matters, that without infringing the laws of his country, he deceives his simple poor neighbour. The greedy rulers in some countries suck the life-blood of the poor by such artful methods of taxation that they can hardly be styled unfair when judged by the prevalent standard of morality. And everywhere vice grows like Upas tree and spreads its baleful influence all around without offending our sense of justice. The very facts that the number of the poor who cannot decently support themselves and their family are enormous in this world ; that the benefits of culture are enjoyed by very few, while masses of people steeped in ignorance spend their days, struggling for an insufficient livelihood ; that lewdness, roguery, and thousand other evils are raging everywhere among men and turning them day by day into the likeness of devils, prove that the society we live in is not perfect, is not just, and our notion of justice requires emendation. A higher view of justice we should come by, so that we may combat and kill these evils.

No doubt benevolent men are everywhere trying to ameliorate the condition of their fellowmen (and all credit is due to them) ; but what is their benevolence, what is their sympathy but a higher notion of justice, a higher idea of the equality of men, than what prevails in

society. The charitable man who unstrings his purse to feed the poor, the benevolent lover of wisdom who establishes free schools and colleges, and the unpaid preacher who tries to turn men from vice to the way of righteousness assert the equality of men by their disinterested works. These men are the exponents of a higher idea of justice. By their acts of sympathy, by their deeds of self-sacrifice, they silently say, as it were, all men are equal, all are one in the Lord. While people look upon them as great benefactors of mankind, they think that by their beneficent deeds they are only helping themselves.

Yes, my friends, they are helping themselves; but not in the mean shopkeeper's way in which worldly men do—worldly men who give in charity either to get good name here or happiness in the other world, or who do even the most insignificant service to others with the expectation of being served by them in return. They are helping themselves by doing those things which will enable them to realise the One in the Many—to realise the universality and grandeur of their own self.

So Vedanta, by teaching us to act on the principle of Equality, urges us to be not only just but perfectly just; and we can expect to be perfectly just only when we are moved by unfailing abundant sympathy towards others in our dealings with them.

From time out of mind, this principle of Equality has been declared to men by the great religions of the world for the guidance of their lives. It has been

declared by the grand hymns of the Vedas ; it has been proclaimed by the great teacher of Kapilavastu ; it has been preached by Jesus Christ and his apostles ; it is to be found in some form in the doctrines of Mahomet, but, alas ! its universal adoption as the ruling principle of life has always been thwarted by the perversity of men. Though men have misinterpreted it, have called it impracticable, absurd, nay pernicious, and have attempted to bury it under heaps of false specious teachings, nevertheless, as it is based on eternal truth, it rises again and again to fire the hearts of the true and godly of this earth. However much self-interested persons may try to convince people that it can never become a practical rule of conduct, yet it is sure to fascinate men in serious and thoughtful moments of their lives, and incline them to the following of it. And it is sure, with the march of time, with the advance of true civilization, the power and dominion of this principle will extend over the hearts of men, and all nations of the earth will acknowledge its indisputable claim to regulate the moral life of mankind.

If we care for truth, if we care to live in the light of truth and thereby attain perfection, let us bear always in mind this second cardinal doctrine of Vedanta—the unity of all men in God,—and acting on the principle of Equality, let us try to be perfectly just and merciful in our dealings with our fellow-men, and thus help to bring the blessings of perfect peace and happiness to human society.

The third cardinal doctrine of Vedanta is the unity of God with man.

When a man's spiritual nature has not sufficiently developed, he thinks of God as a Being dwelling in a distant place,—either in a temple consecrated to his holy name, or on the top of a mountain, or somewhere in the clouds, or higher up in an abode beyond the sky. The idea of an omnipresent God, rarely, if ever, dawns upon his mind. In discussions with others about the nature of God, he may be forced to admit that God is everywhere, even in his own heart, yet that admission does not proceed from his deep-felt conviction. He does not feel God's presence within himself, nor does he feel Him as one existing very near to him, and watching over him. So when spiritual longings are roused in his soul, he, in search of God, goes to temples or churches, visits sacred places on high hills and quiet banks of rivers, or in the quietitude of his home, lifts up, in prayerful attitude, his eyes to the vast blue dome above, thinking that the Supreme dwells somewhere beyond it. Thus he seeks God as one seeks a dear lost possession. Yet, all the while, God is with him. At times, we see that a man, out of forgetfulness, searches for his watch though it is in his pocket. He wanders from room to room in his house, hoping to find it in any of them; he ransacks piles of articles thinking that he may have left it somewhere amongst them, when lo! some friend, comes to see him, and observing the watch in his pocket, draws his attention to it, and thus puts an end to his restless but vain

search. Or after a period of fruitless quest, after vexing his mind for some time in trying to recollect its whereabouts, he suddenly feels it in his pocket, and in a mingled feeling of gladness and self-rebuke, says, "How foolish I was to search for the watch, when all along it was in my pocket, so close to my breast!" Even so, God is always with every man, nay, within him; yet, forgetting his such near presence, he thinks Him to be dwelling in temples, or in sacred spots of the earth, and so seeks Him in such places.

No doubt, true it is that God is everywhere—in beautiful as well as in ugly places; true it is also that when a man visits beautiful spots, he thinks of God more than he usually does, feels for a while God's nearness to him, and thus enjoys an exquisite pleasure, yet this happy feeling does not last long; it rises in him like a glimmer of light to disappear again. True happiness—happiness that will know no end, but remain as his ever-during possession—will come to him only when he shall learn to feel God's eternal presence within himself. He should turn his gaze from outside and find God in his own soul.

Believing in the omnipresence of God, when a man begins to understand, nay, feel, that God is within him, then commences a new era in his spiritual history. All his actions grow righteous from that conviction—from the feeling of the presence of God within. No man can give himself over to wickedness, if he remembers that God is near, watching over all his actions; much less

can he do so when he has learnt to feel God's presence in his soul. Like a bright light in the middle of a room, this central belief dispels the darkness of vice from all sides of his character, and bathes it in a sweet effulgence of holiness. Then as he grows holy in his life, questions about the real nature of his self naturally arise in his mind. He asks: "What am I? God is omnipresent, God is all-powerful; without Him, nothing can exist, nothing can act. What, then, is my true nature? Apparently, I can achieve many things; I can direct my hands, feet, tongue, and other organs to fulfill my desires, but, in moments of spiritual insight I have been convinced, that all my powers come from God. What am I? Am I a tool in His hand and so different from Him? or have I any closer relation to Him?"

When these questions arise in a man's breast, consciously or unconsciously, he plunges himself into a serious enquiry about the nature of man's ego.

What is man's ego?

Ask any ordinary man, "What are you?," he will say that he is the son of such and such parents; that he is a landowner, or a trader, or an employee of some office. Then if you enter into a pretty long conversation with him, he will probably inform you that he is healthy or diseased, long-sighted or short-sighted, married or unmarried, happy or miserable. He will make so many assertions about himself, all of which will on examination turn out to be vague and indefinite. When

a man considers himself healthy or diseased, married or unmarried, he identifies himself with his body; when he considers himself long-sighted or short-sighted, he identifies himself with one of his senses; when he considers himself happy or miserable, he identifies himself with his mental state. The profession, health or disease, married or unmarried state, happiness or misery, of a man are not the characteristics of his self. These are ever-fluctuating incidents of his body, senses, and mind. That he is purely a conscious being,—that consciousness, the ever-unchanging principle to which these shifting qualities of body, senses, and mind are presented, is his very nature,—is seldom pondered over by an ordinary man given to the pleasures of the world. But with the growth of spiritual life a man becomes dissatisfied with the common-sense view of his self.

The growth of spiritual life gradually convinces a man that he is not identical with his body, or sense-group, or mind; it inclines him to fathom the depth of his own nature. So the spiritual man asks again and again, "What am I?," and he proceeds with the enquiry about his self more or less in the following manner.

He argues: I am not identical with my body; for my body is ever changing—it is born, it grows, decays, and meets with death; I am not identical with my senses; for they too are subject to the same order of changes as that to which my body is subject; I am not identical with even my mind; for my mind, characterized by joys, sorrows, and other feelings, by sensations, ideas and



thoughts, by desires and determinations, is as changeable as my body and senses. But behind my mind, infusing into it its own nature, there is a principle of pure simple consciousness which knows no change, and to which the changes of my body, senses, and mind are presented. Itself unchangeable, it makes the perception of the changes possible. That unchangeable principle I am—that pure simple consciousness is my true nature. But where does this consciousness, which proves everything without requiring any proof from any quarter, this self-evident principle, come from? What is its relation to God?

Then as he, searching for the source of consciousness, rises higher and higher on the wings of thought, he lights on the highest view-point of truth. As God is one without a second, as he is the One Infinite Source of all things, and as nothing exists besides him to limit His infinitude, and as He is the Eternal Origin and Abode of consciousness, individual consciousness must be the expression of His nature; consciousness in man is a revelation of the Divine Light. And as he dwells on the facts that his body, senses, and mind are really unconnected with his nature, and that pure simple consciousness is the very essence of his existence, there suddenly flashes upon his mind the deep significance of the most important teaching of the Upanishads embodied in such phrases as, "That thou art" "I am one with God." But this knowledge which dawns upon him in a happy moment becomes a deep living conviction

only when he grows perfectly pure in deed and pure in thought, and with a pure heart, meditates from day to day on the eternal Truth which is the subject of that knowledge. Such holy meditation reveals to him the power, the sweetness, and the grandeur of the Truth, and with ineffable rapture he realises his unity with God.

Man is in essence one with God. This is the third and the highest doctrine of Vedanta. Yet, this unity with God is a fact which is realised by a man in the end, after he has, with indescribable watchfulness, struggled forward on the spiritual path. The realisation of this unity is the consummation of a man's spiritual efforts; it is the perfection of his wisdom. This supreme unity is not a matter for vain conversation or idle disputation; it should be deeply pondered over in a pious mood, felt and realised.

But such is the foolishness of the world, that of all Vedantic doctrines, man's unity with God is the one that it will readily accept and pervert in its own way. Tell worldly men of the first doctrine of Vedanta that there is only one God, so there is no difference between the God of one creed and the God of another creed, they will hear your words with indifference. What does it matter to them whether there is one God or there are many Gods? What does it matter to them if honour is paid to the Divine Being in one way or other? They are willing to embrace any creed, be it monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic or monistic;

for there is one god whom they love and adore more than any other, and that god's name is Mammon. Tell worldly men of the third cardinal doctrine of Vedanta, that man and God are one, they will listen greedily to your teaching. For, it pampers their vanity; it countenances (so they imagine) the numerous vices and obliquities of their lives. "I am one with God,"—yes, this must be true; I was so long a fool to be troubled with the prickings of conscience; the ugly expostulations of it in pleasant moments were only vain fancies—henceforward, I will never listen to the voice of conscience, but drown it by the tumult of enjoyment. Such are the thoughts of some perverted ~~nīta~~ <sup>nīta</sup> who misinterpret this sacred doctrine of Vedanta. But tell these very same men of the second cardinal doctrine, that there is no difference between man and man, immediately will burst from them a storm of protest; nay, some of them, like hornets disturbed from their nest, will rush at you with a furious buzz. "What! No difference between man and man!" The proud rich man will cry out, "No difference between me and the wretched fellow dwelling near my house! What a foolish doctrine! Have I not horses and carriages, numerous servants to attend upon me? Have I not bags of gold in my treasure-chest? Have I not a large sum of money deposited in the bank? And this dreamer's philosophy, Vedanta, teaches that I am not different from the poor?" The man of high caste will exclaim, "Nonsense! No difference between man and man! I am a Brahmin—

born in the noblest family. Wise men have said that the Brahmins are the gods of earth. Can I be one with the Pariah? Never! Never! It is a false doctrine—this doctrine of Vedanta. They say, God is everywhere—even in the Pariah; whether that is true or not, I do not know. But I know that I am superior to men of low-caste.” And the self-righteous man will boastfully assert, “I am not as vicious as other men are—men given to drunkenness, lying, and other evil habits. I am better than them in thousand respects. Surely I am destined to go to heaven and enjoy ever-lasting happiness, while they shall burn in the sulphurous fire of hell. How am I one with them?”

Thus worldly men, each in his own way, will repudiate this second doctrine of Vedanta. Willing they are to accept the first and the third doctrine; but the second is the hardest doctrine for them to acquiesce in. Yet, no man can be said to be a follower of Vedanta unless he acknowledges the truth of this second doctrine, and tries to live in conformity with it.

We observe, the intellectual development of every man takes place in a definite manner. The child becomes conscious of the external world before it becomes conscious of its own being. From the day it breathes the air of this earth, its unfolding senses receive various impressions from the objective world. Its eyes note distinctions of colour; its ears, distinctions of sound; its hands grasp and let loose things pleasant and unpleasant; its feet become accustomed to support its

frame. The child learns first the names of external objects. In short, its mind busies itself first with studying outer objects—its mental energies first flow outside. After its mind has developed considerably, after it has frequently come in sharp contact with outer realities, its attention is directed within. Then comes to it self-consciousness, its highest privilege as a human being. As this is the order in which the intellect of man unfolds, as world-consciousness comes to him before self-consciousness, so it is natural that the same order will be seen in the development of his spirituality. The spiritual man will realise God first in the outer world, God in his fellow-men, before he realises God in himself.

So, if you are desirous of developing your spiritual nature, try to act according to the first and the second cardinal doctrines of Vedanta, try to feel the presence of God in the universe, especially, in your fellow-men. By acting on the Vedantic principle of Equality, by unflinchingly adhering to the rules of justice and sympathy in your dealings with others, when you shall purify your nature of selfishness, when your heart shall learn to feel the presence of God in all men, in every thing, then, like the dawning of self-consciousness in the mind of a child, will dawn on you the consciousness of God in your self; you will feel your unity with the Supreme, and peace, abundant and ineffable, will be your everlasting possession.

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# Concentration.

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CONCENTRATION is an active state of mind more or less familiar to all of us. We experience this active state frequently in our daily life. As necessity arises, consciously or unconsciously, we gather the forces of our mind and fix them on some object or other. From slight attention we bestow on a passing sight or sound to rapt absorption in some holy thought, various degrees of concentration of mind are known to us. Without this active mental state, we cannot enjoy those varied pleasures which sweeten our life ; we cannot achieve those noble deeds which give value and charm to our existence ; we cannot possess those powers which elevate our life above that of the brute. Though our eyes be healthy, yet we can not see anything, unless our mind be attentive ; though our ears be sound, yet we can not hear anything, unless our mind stretch out to receive reports brought by them ; though our hands be strong, yet we are not able to grasp anything, unless our mind impel and guide them. And when our mind attends to a sensation or initiates an action, it gathers its scattered powers and uses them in their united condition for the purpose. In other words, for the rise of all sensations, for the thinking of all thoughts, for the performance of all actions, the *sin qua non* is attention or concentration of mind.

But such fugitive instances of concentration are generally not noticed by us. They are so blended with the even flow of our life that they are hardly perceived. But those moments of meditation, those occasions of deep thought, in which our mental powers are highly converged, the sphere of our consciousness is greatly narrowed, are keenly felt by all of us; especially, when they pass away leaving us in the ordinary life of diffused attention. On account of the strong contrast of these occasions with our usual mental life, they are very conspicuous; hence, the word "concentration" is generally used to designate mental activity characterizing them. Nevertheless, a little thought will convince any one that between slight attention and deep absorption, of the mind in any subject there is only a difference of degree.

Therefore, if we wish to study the subject of concentration—its nature and the conditions most favourable to the production of it—we cannot neglect the study of ordinary instances of attention. By studying them, we can discover those laws by following which deeper developments of attention can be easily attained.

We see that we can fix our mind either on any perceptible object, or on the mental image or idea of that object; to express it in the language of Psychology, either on a presentation, or on a representation. There, in the tree before me, I see a lovely flower. I may contemplate its beautiful colour, admirable structure, and other properties so much that I may entirely lose

sight of other objects. Rejecting all other objects, my consciousness may seize it exclusively. Such a state of mind I call concentration on an external object or a presentation. I may remark here that, instead of a single object such as a flower, a group of objects may absorb my attention and make me oblivious of similar other groups. Again, reviving in my mind the image of an absent friend, I may be so rapt in thinking of him that all other ideas, all other thoughts, may be excluded from the chamber of my consciousness. Such a state of mind I call concentration on an idea or a representation. We should remember in this connection that on all occasions of serious thinking, in reveries, it may not be a single idea, but a train of ideas that may captivate our mind excluding similar other trains.

Further, it should be noted that we may concentrate our mind by the effort of our will, or it may get itself concentrated without any effort on our part; nay, our mind may be so seized by an idea that that idea may dominate our consciousness against our will—in spite of our desire to get rid of it. This latter state of involuntary concentration of mind is often experienced by us in our every-day life. When we have heard a lively song, it often happens that we feel the air of it ringing in our ears for a long time. How frequently we sing the song ourselves against our will! How in the midst of our serious business, our mind reverts to it again and again! A boy plays a football match and comes home. He sits down in his study to master his lessons. If he



be not of strong will (and most boys are not of that nature), how often he finds that the images of the various exciting situations of the ball during the match come to his mind again and again, and prevent the subject of his study from producing any deep impression on it. The boy's mind is captured by the scenes of the football ground—he is involuntarily attentive to them. Or take the case of a sensitive man who sees some repulsive sight, say, a cobra coiled round the neck of a snake-charmer. Such a sight sends a shudder through the frame of a sensitive man. For a long time the ugly thought of the cobra and the snake-charmer continues to torment his mind. Though he tries to forget the matter, yet long does it persist in rising in his consciousness against his will and causing a repulsive feeling. To give another example. The man who has lost his dear friend or relation thinks of him again and again. Though he tries not to think of the departed one often, as the thought is painful, and as it prevents him from doing his duties, yet how his mind often concentrates itself on him ! Though he tries to forget his sorrow by engaging himself in numerous works, by crowding his mind with various impressions from the external world, yet from time to time, against his will, comes the thought of his dear lost one, and driving out all his other thoughts, plunges him into a gloomy reverie. All these are cases of involuntary concentration.

The savage and the civilised, the child and the grown-up man, the spiritually developed and the spir-

itually undeveloped, all get these involuntary states. There is no virtue in falling into them; since no effort of the will is involved in their production. On the other hand, we exercise our will in preventing their frequent occurrences. For, these states, instead of helping forward the development of a man's mind, often cause the degeneration of it.

We observe that involuntary attention is the characteristic of children, savages, and other mentally undeveloped persons. Children's hearts are so captivated by baubles and curious objects that they gaze upon them or run after them, heedless of all danger that may be in their way. The sight of a big game so seizes the heart of a savage that he chases it forgetful of all other works. And there are men who are so mentally undeveloped, so destitute of self-control, that they are seized with mono-mania for trivial objects promising them pleasure. But to be able, by force of will, to concentrate mind on any object of choice is the characteristic of a man mentally elevated. Systematic thought, wilful absorption in the contemplation of any good idea, rapt meditation on God, are the traits of a man whose powers of mind are highly developed. We shall not be wrong if we say that the mental development of a man is in direct ratio to his power of voluntary concentration.

All great men—great artists, great scientists, great philosophers, and great devotees of God—have a highly developed power of mental concentration. They use

it for their special ends as trained craftsmen do their finished tools. It is by the concentration of mind that a man increases his sphere of knowledge, unravels mysteries surrounding him, discovers new truths and presents them to the world in beautiful language.

It is stated that once the great artist of England, Turner, was travelling in a railway train on a very rainy and stormy night. As the train approached Bristol station, it was a sublime spectacle to see from it the scene outside—"a chaos of elemental and artificial lights." Turner drew down the window of his car, thrust his head out, and watched the scene for a few minutes. Then drawing up the window, he sat silent for some time, with eyes closed, deeply meditating what he had noticed. By thus concentrating his mind, he got such a deep impression of the scene, that he afterwards reproduced it with his brush. The wonderful picture was in course of time exhibited in the gallery of the Royal Academy with the inscription,—“Rain, steam and speed, Great Western Railway, June .....1843.” A lady who was a fellow-traveller of Turner on that memorable night saw this picture, and in wonder and admiration testified to its scrupulous truthfulness.\* Because Turner had a highly developed faculty of concentrating his mind on anything he chose, so he was one of the greatest painters of nature in both her beautiful and sublime aspects.

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\* *Vide* John Ruskin's *Dilecta* Chap. III.

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It is said also that once while the great natural philosopher Gallileo was walking along the aisles of a church of Pisa, his eyes casually fell on a chandelier, which, having been somehow disturbed, was swinging to and fro. He began to note carefully the oscillations of the chandelier and meditate on their nature. Meditation revealed to him the well-known laws of pendulum. To-day we are using clocks and watches, because those laws were discovered by Gallileo.

Even in the same manner, the story of Archimedes discovering the method of finding out the specific gravities of bodies, proves the immense value of mental concentration. The great Syracusean philosopher was asked by the tyrant Hero to find out whether a crown of gold that had been made for him was alloyed with base metal or not. Any man of those days could have said whether the gold of the crown was pure or not by melting it; but Hero had no mind to destroy the crown on account of its beautiful shape. At the same time he wished to detect alloyage, if there had been any. So to Archimedes he set the problem: How to detect admixture of any base metal in the crown without melting it. Archimedes pondered over the matter for several days. He focussed on it all the powers of his great intellect. It is said that when he went to take bath, he observed that a certain quantity of water flowed from the full reservoir as he stepped into it. Immediately in a flash as it were was revealed to him the solution of the problem with which his mind had been busy.

It struck him that the ratio of the weight of a body in air to the weight of water of equal volume must always be constant; and that the latter weight can easily be calculated by weighing the body twice—once in air, and once in water. His heart was so full of joy at the discovery that he leaped out of the bath and ran undressed through the streets of Syracuse, shouting “Eureka! Eureka!”—“I have found it! I have found it!” The apparently insoluble problem was thus solved by the concentration of mind of Archimedes.

If we read the lives of great modern philosophers, we learn that their minds also were characterized by high powers of concentration. The long hours of meditation which Rene des Cartes spent in his bed\* or Immanuel Kant passed vacantly gazing on the tower a church† enabled these philosophers to elaborate systems of philosophy to the admiration of the world. It is concentration of mind that opened to them new visions

\*“All his (des cartes’) best meditation was done in the morning hours while lying in bed.”—*Mahaffy’s “Descartes,” Chap. II.* (Blackwood’s Philosophical classics).

† “On returning from his walk, he (Kant) set to work  
\* \* \* \* \*. As darkness began to fall, he would take his seat at the stove and with his eye fixed on the tower of Lobennicht Church, would ponder on the problems which exercised his mind. One evening, however, as he looked, a change had occurred—the church tower was no longer visible. His neighbour’s poplars had grown so fast that at last, without his being aware, they had hid the turret behind them. Kant, deprived of the material support which had steadied his speculations, was completely thrown out. Fortunately his neighbour was generous—the tops of the poplars were cut, and Kant could reflect at his ease again.”—*Wallace’s “Kant,” Chap. IV.* (Blackwood’s Philosophical classics).

of Truth—new ideas connected with human life, Nature, and God.

If we turn from the stories of the achievements of great artists, scientists, and philosophers to the stories of the lives of spiritual heroes, we find that they all possessed a highly developed power of concentration. Great spiritual men attained eminence mostly by meditation. Who does not know the story of Budha gaining Supreme Light while meditating under the Bodhi tree? Who has not heard of the trances of Yogis of ancient days? Do we not read of the watchful prayers of Jesus and Mahomet and other great souls who followed in their footsteps?

Our ancient books repeatedly tell us that the three steps by which a man can know God are Sravanam, Mananam, and Nididhyanam—hearing of the nature of God, arguing about it, and meditation on it. Meditation or concentration of mind is the final step by which a man attains the blessedness of Supreme Knowledge. “Yogamulam Jnanam,”—Without meditation, without repeated concentration of mind on God, no man can hope to realise Him. It may be held by some that by listening to a master’s words about the nature of the Truth, one may get rid of one’s ignorance, without any further effort, but such a purely theoretical conclusion is, rarely, if ever, corroborated by facts. All great souls spent years in meditation to attain the goal of their lives.

But highly difficult it is for an ordinary man to

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concentrate his mind on any important subject ; much more this is so when the subject is a scared one. Tell a worldly man to meditate on God ; he may be very able and intelligent in managing his worldly affairs ; he may be in the habit of attending to them for hours ; yet when he tries to withdraw his mind from its habitual thoughts, turn it from its usual course, and direct it towards God, how sadly he fails ! He may sit in a very silent place, he may close his eyes to prevent all undesirable sights from causing distracting impressions, he may adopt the most suitable posture for meditation, yet he will find to his sorrow his inability to control his mind. Its waywardness, its vagaries, will seem to him incorrigible. Though he may determine not to harbour in his mind at the time of meditation any other thought than that of God, yet thousand worldly thoughts will come to it unbidden. Imperceptibly they will appear in the hall of his mind and march in disorderly procession. After making a firm resolution and after prolonged efforts, he may succeed in fixing his attention on God for a few seconds or a few minutes, but this happy state of attentiveness will not last long. In a short time, thoughts about himself, thoughts about his wife and children, thoughts about his position in society, thoughts about his quarrel with his neighbours, thoughts of wealth, fame, and thousand other objects, will rise in his mind. His repeated attempts to drive them out will meet with very little success. Disappearing for a while, they will appear again. Expelled by

one way, they will enter mysteriously by other ways. How to check these roving habits of the mind ?

Arjuna told Krishna :—

*Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramathi vala-  
vaddridham, Tasyaham nigraham manye vayo-  
riva sudushkaram.*

“O Krishna the mind is restless, it falls off from its purpose, it is powerful and cannot be easily brought under control. I find the conquest of my mind to be as difficult as the conquest of the ever-restless wind.”

On which Krishna said :—

*Asamsayam mahavaho manah durnigraham  
chalam ! Avhyasena tu kaunteya vairagyena  
cha grihyate.\**

“No doubt the mind is not easily conquerable, it is restless in its nature ; yet, by repeated attempts and by the cultivation of dispassionateness (to the pleasures of the senses), it can be brought under control.”

An ordinary man's mind often roves while he meditates on God, because he does not find pleasure in such meditation. Many a person will not readily admit this statement, yet a little sincere self-examination will convince him of the truth of it. Whatever a man loves much, that he finds delight in contemplating on. The things of the world are intensely loved by most men. From day to day their minds dwell on such things with great pleasure ; repeatedly they receive impressions from them ; hence, thoughts connected with

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\* Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Ch. VI, 34 and 35.



worldly things naturally rise in their minds ; and they find it extremely difficult to control such thoughts.

The first step to be taken by a man who is desirous of decreasing the powerful hold of worldly thoughts on his mind, so that they may not cause distraction by rising unbidden in his hour of meditation, is the cultivation of dispassionateness towards worldly objects. In the case of every man the great art of living happily and in peace consists in guarding himself with the armour of self-restraint. If a man is not tempted by the pleasant objects of the world, if he lives self-controlled and unattached in the midst of them, his heart never receives deep impressions from them, and so in his hour of meditation, thoughts of worldly objects do not rise against his will in his mind. It is necessary, therefore, for every man who is troubled with roving thoughts to prevent his mind from receiving deep impressions from worldly objects, and this he can do by the cultivation of a dispassionate attitude towards them. He should often meditate on the transitory nature of all things of this world, the hallowness of pleasures derived from them, and the injurious influence which such pleasures often exercise on a man's nature by incapacitating him for high spiritual life.

And the second step to be taken by him, according to the advice of the Lord Krishna to Arjuna, is the breaking of the roving habits of his mind by the repeated practice of meditation. Regular, systematic, and frequent practice of meditation will impart a new character to

his mind—induce into it a new power. Its old roving habits will be displaced by new habits of attentiveness. Then he will be able to fix his mind by voluntary effort on any object he desires. And what greater power can there be than this of focussing the mind on the object of one's choice? All difficulties are surmounted, all tasks are easily performed, by him who attains this power.

Everything in the universe is under the dominion of Laws. Nothing in nature takes place by chance. Even in apparently disorderly events there reigns a hidden order. The roving capricious ways of the mind do not form exception to this rule. Modern Psychologists have discovered the "Laws of Association of Ideas" in accordance with which our thought moves even in its wildest vagaries. An idea, when it has risen in our mind, brings after it another idea similar to it, or closely related to it, or in open contrast with it. Thus, by virtue of similarity, contiguity, and contrast, one idea draws innumerable other ideas in its train, and so comes to our mind the confused crowd of ideas so injurious to meditation. Just as the mind follows certain laws even in its restless movements, so it obeys certain other laws in becoming concentrated. So, if we desire to correct the roving habits of our mind and train it up in habits of concentration, we should find out those laws under which it naturally gets concentrated;—we should discover those conditions under which it naturally inclines towards concentration. For natural laws can be counteracted only by natural laws; difficulties created

by Nature can be overcome only by means which she herself has provided. As the deep river which Nature puts as an obstacle in our path can be bridged over by us only by using materials which she herself supplies, and by arranging them according to the laws of Mechanics which she herself teaches us, even so the natural restlessness of our mind can be got over by us by following certain rules, by fulfilling certain conditions, which Nature indicates to us. Following those rules, fulfilling those conditions, we should systematically practise meditation. Systematic practice or Abhyasa, as the Lord Krishna said, will enable us to attain perfect control over our mind.

The conditions favourable to the attainment of concentration of mind may be classed under two general heads: first, those connected with our environments; second, those connected with our own persons.

The first condition that we should fulfill in order to get our mind concentrated easily is to have a select place for our practice. It is not anywhere and everywhere, that an ordinary man whose mind is not under his control can meditate on God. Men who are naturally endowed with great spiritual powers or who are of high spiritual culture may be able to fix their mind on Him anywhere they like, but it is not in the power of an ordinary man to do so. The place where a man meditates exercises a great influence on his mind. So one of the Upanishads says, "*Manonukule na tu chakshu pidane guha nivatasrayane prayojayet*"—

“Practise meditation in an attractive place where there are no sights painful to the eye.” The beautiful spots of the earth,—the silent mountain-tops or the peaceful river-banks—naturally produce a holy calm on our heart and incline it to contemplation. John Ruskin said, the mountains are the natural cathedrals of God. On a high hill where the din of town life never offends our ears, where only the sweet voices of birds and the solemn whispers of trees are heard, and where the cool air and the clear blue sky take away the weariness of our body and soul, who does not feel a desire to lift his heart to God? Or sitting silent in a solitary place through which a river murmurs on to the ocean, perpetually reminding men of the duty of moving onwards and finding rest in the bosom of the Infinite God, who does not feel a sacred yearning for a higher life and make a beginning of it by meditation? Men of town very seldom visit such lovely places, but when they happen to do so, they should not come away from them without tasting the joy of meditation.

It may be asked, should those persons who have little chance of frequenting such places (and very few persons have) not practise contemplation? Should they give up all ideas of meditating on God because they have no proper place? Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say: Contemplate on God either in a forest or in some corner of your dwelling-place, or in the silence of your heart. He meant by this that let those who can go to a forest do so, but let them,

who cannot, find at least a silent place in their home, and meditate daily on God. Even if they cannot do this, let them abstract their mind as often as they can from the bustle of worldly life, and in the silence thus created in their heart, let them, in earnest devotion, commune with God.

So even if you cannot find a naturally beautiful spot suitable for meditative exercises, enter into your closet, shut the door, and practise concentration as long and as often as you can. When, by long practice, you have trained your mind, then you will be able to rise above the hampering influence of a distracting place and concentrate it on God anywhere and everywhere.

The next condition which is favourable to concentration and to which I wish to draw your attention is suitable time. Though all hours of the day as well as of the night may be found equally good by the holy man long given to meditation, yet there are certain hours that will be found better for his purpose than others by a novice who is just learning to meditate. Especially congenial to meditation will be found by a novice the morning and the evening hours—morning hours when our brain is refreshed, and when the sight of the rising sun and the joyous commencement of life's activity by all creatures rouses a holy delight in us and disposes us to think of Him from whom life and its joys proceed; and the evening hours when, with the setting of the sun, a sacred calm imperceptibly steals over our hearts, when all living creatures seek rest, and when our hearts, filled

with satisfaction from the completion of our day's work naturally longs to taste the sweetness of holy thoughts. There is a subtle sympathy between us and the great orb of day. His rising and setting act on us in mysterious ways. And if we are not dead to all poetic feelings, we should understand that the great Lord of light, by painting the clouds of heaven in ineffable glowing colours and by throwing a mantle of beauty on all objects of earth, asks us every morning and evening to gaze up from him and all other beautiful objects of Nature to that Fountain-head from which comes the light of the luminous, the beauty of the beautiful, and the sublimity of the sublime.

Therefore, let him who is desirous of practising contemplation set apart for the purpose, if he can, the morning and the evening hours. If he is not able to do so, let him choose other hours—hours of the advanced day or of the advanced night—and persist in his practice. Let him not forget that the practice of meditation is what is essential, and so if he be wise, he should not give up the practice because he cannot find suitable hours to engage in it. And if he cannot find time to sit down and meditate for a sensibly long period, let him, according to our Lord's golden advice, in silent meditation, wistfully lift his heart to God during brief periods of few minutes intercalated between his hours of wordly business. Even such short moments of meditation, snatched from the bustle of active life will not go in vain.

Let us now consider those conditions of body and of mind which are most congenial to concentration.

The first question that naturally rises in our mind when we begin to practise concentration is, what posture of the body should we adopt? Should we walk, or stand still, or lie down, or sit quiet, while meditating on God?

A little thought will convince you that walking and standing are not very favourable to concentration. When we walk a large amount of our energy is expended in the physical exertion, and so, little is left for mental effort. Concentration is a highly active state though the activity of it is internal. If the greater part of our available energy be drafted away in physical exertion, very little is then left for the use of the mind. Just observe the ways of a man of thoughtful turn of mind, when he walks. As long as no serious idea has captivated his mind, he walks at a brisk pace, but as soon as an attractive idea sets free the flow of his thought, his pace slackens, the firmness of his gait diminishes, his eyes assume a vacant stare, and if the current of thought deepens still more, his motion is fully arrested; he stands still or sits down to indulge in musing. Motion of body and concentration of mind are mutually antagonistic. So when we meditate, we should suppress as far as possible all movements of our bodies.

As walking is not favourable to concentration, as it makes a heavy demand on our available energy, so also is to certain extent the attitude of standing. Though

this posture is better than walking, yet even in it a great part of our available energy is expended in keeping the body erect. When we stand we are more circumspect than when we sit down. Needless to say that the lying posture is not in any way favourable to meditation; that being the attitude in which our muscles are relaxed and in which we enjoy rest every night, we are easily overpowered by sleep, if we adopt it when we meditate. The sitting posture, therefore, is the best in which to contemplate. In this posture no great amount of energy is unnecessarily wasted nor does it so readily bring in the oblivion of slumber.

Further, when we sit down to meditate, we should not sit with our muscles relaxed and our chest doubled down. As in the state of concentration, our mind is alert, so the muscles of our body, especially, those of the eyes and forehead should be to a certain extent in tense condition. Tenseness of muscles and watchfulness of mind go together. Hence, Asanas or definite bodily postures of meditation—postures in which we can sit erect and long—have been recommended by our Yoga Shastras. When we get into the proper attitude of prayer or meditation, that attitude induces by suggestion also calmness of mind and contemplative disposition.

It may be said by way of objection to this statement, that at times we find that we are better able to get over an intellectual difficulty, better able to think out the solution of a pressing problem while indulging in some kind of physical movement than while sitting



still in one place. Some persons can work out a mathematical problem or elaborate a business scheme in their mind while walking, or scratching their head, or rubbing their chin, or mechanically moving some other part of the body. We meet with peripatetic orators, hear of lawyers who require balls of thread to roll between their fingers, or pieces of paper to tear into pieces, when they wish to make a display of forensic eloquence for the benefit of their clients.

It is true that slight movements are at times helpful to persons engaged in some work requiring deep thought, but this fact does not subvert the general statement I have just now made. These movements in the case of such persons serve but to rouse their brain from torpor, and set the mechanism of their intellect in motion. Such gentle movements, by sending back currents of stimuli to the brain, excite it to work with greater vigour. So they enable those who indulge in them to invent, to get over the initial difficulties of any piece of intellectual work, but when the work is in fair progress, when the mechanism of the intellect is in intense working condition, these movements slowly stop, and with the convergence of attention to its object comes the cessation of all useless movements of the body.

Therefore, in any easy posture, with your spine erect, you should sit down to meditate. The seat in which you sit down should neither be too high or too low; for, from very high seats you may fall down while rapt in thought, and very low seats may not prevent

minute creatures which creep and crawl everywhere on the ground from getting on your body and causing disturbance. Thus taught our ancient Yogis.

They taught also before you begin to meditate you should practise Pranayama. Pranayama means the control of breath by systematic exercise. We observe that when a man is deeply attentive to any subject, he holds his breath. Long and quick breathings are not compatible with deep thought. The man of long and quick breath is a man of restless mind. This was clearly noted by our ancient Yogis. They observed many other facts connected with respiration and elaborated a system of breathing exercises helpful to those practicing them in easily concentrating their mind. It is difficult to give a brief but adequate description of these exercises, nor can such a description be of any use to any person unless he receives practical instruction about them from an experienced teacher. Unless learnt directly from a teacher, they may cause serious disorders of the body, and thus instead of being helps may turn out to be hinderances to one's advancement. Nevertheless, I shall try to explain to you such *rationale* of these exercises as the Yogis of old put forward.

In the living human body, there go on various vital processes, such as respiration, digestion, circulation of blood, activity of the brain and nerves. Life is maintained by these processes. But of all these processes, the most important one is respiration. As long as

life lasts, this process continues. Even in sleep, when man's senses become inactive, when his consciousness is temporarily dimmed or darkened, his breath goes in and comes out. In the case of all ordinary persons, a prolonged cessation of respiration brings about death. Like the swinging of the pendulum in the clock, like the to-and-fro motion of the piston rod in the cylinder of a steam engine, the in-going and the out-going movements of breath are highly important in our frame. Again, the respiratory process is intimately connected with all other vital processes. By keeping it healthy we keep them healthy; by deranging it we derange them. Not only is it thus connected with other vital processes, it is closely united with our mental life.

Our ancient Yogis taught that the mental and the physical life of man are really one at bottom. According to them, our mind is material even as our body is material, and so the characteristics and changes of our body are connected with the characteristics and changes of our mind; the vital processes not only make mental life possible, but their healthy and unhealthy states, in various ways, determine our good and bad thoughts. And of all the vital processes the most important one, respiration, influences mental life in a very subtle manner. By imperceptible links, our thoughts and sentiments are bound with our respiration.

I shall try to explain to you why our ancient Yogis thought that by controlling respiration we can control our mind. In order to understand their views, you should

bear in mind that according to all Hindu philosophers the mind and the senses are material in their nature. The Yogis of old accepted this doctrine of ancient Philosophy.

According to the philosophical system of the Yogis\* when the senses and the mind perform their several functions, (the senses give rise to sensations and the mind receives, combines, arranges them, and then stores images of them), they conjointly produce what we call life. Life is the result of the united activity of the senses and the mind, whereas sensations and thoughts are the outcome of their separate individual activities. And life manifests itself in the form of several Vayus or forces, viz., Prana, Apana, Samana, Vyana, and Udana. By these Vayus or forces, various vital processes such as respiration, digestion of food, etc., are carried on in the body. Prana is the force by which the respiratory process is carried on. Apana is the force by which the refuse matter of the body is thrown out. By the action of Samana, food is digested and blood is formed. By Vyana, every part of the body is supplied with energy so that it is capable of putting forth effort in various works. By Udana, the head and the neck are kept erect and voice is produced. Though these forces act differently, yet they are all one at bottom. So, if we control the principal one of them, viz., the Prana, and its activity, the respiration, we can control the other forces and the other processes

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\* Patanjali's Yoga Sutras; *vide* Vyasa's Commentary III, 39.

carried on by them. And as I have told you that these vital processes, according to the Yogis, are the result of the conjoint activity of the mind and the senses, so by controlling them, we can control the senses. Finally, by controlling the senses, we can have perfect control over the mind; for the mind is the ruler of the senses. As by the defeat of the army, its general is defeated, so by the subjugation of the senses, the mind, their chief, also is subjugated.

Therefore our Yogis say, control your respiration and you will control your mind. You can easily see for yourselves that a breathing exercise, such as a deep inspiration followed by long suspension of breath, and then slow expiration according to definite rules, has a great soothing effect on the mind. A few such Inspiration-Suspension-of-breath-and-Expirations will throw oil as it were upon the agitation of your mind caused by distracting worldly thoughts.

If you desire, practise for a while, with your heart fixed on God, such respiratory exercises, after learning them from an experienced teacher. These exercises will help you in your meditation.

But you should remember, that however valuable these exercises may be, they need not be practised by all. A man must control his breath, attain the end of these exercises, when by the force of his will he gets into the state of deep thought. Depth of thought is the desideratum, be it realised by any means.

Let us now turn our attention from these physical aids to concentration to some of the mental aids.

We should not forget that we are studying voluntary concentration. In such a state the highest activity of the will takes place. In meditating on any subject, our will is active not only in inhibiting the rush of irrelevant ideas, but also in keeping the powers of the mind converged and thus producing a vivid consciousness of the object of thought. Hence, as concentration is essentially an active state of the will, those mental conditions which stimulate the will may advantageously be created by us.

It is a well-known psychical fact that our will can be easily excited to activity by the excitement of our emotions. Tasks that appear impracticable to us in cold blood are easily undertaken and achieved by us when our hearts are warmed. Greed, ambition, friendship, love, and hatred have immense power in making us put forth our best energies to achieve the various ends of our life.

There are innumerable excitants of emotion about all of which neither do I desire nor is it proper to speak to you now, but I wish to remind you of a very wholesome and efficient excitant of emotion well-known to all; I mean, music.

Music whether vocal or instrumental has a mysterious power over our hearts. Music can fill us with courage when our hearts are overcome with fear; it can infuse patience when we are overpowered with sorrow; it can rouse in us holy impulses towards self-conquest when we are beset with temptations. The soldier bravely

marches to the battle-field with the accompaniment of martial music; the woe-stricken widow resigns herself to her lot impressed by holy songs describing the mysterious ways of Providence; the hardened sinner at times becomes a new man after listening to divine praises chanted by holy men. Most of us know many an instance in which music has brought about a serious change in the life of a man and has roused his will from a dormant or depraved state to wholesome activity.

As by rousing emotions we can easily rouse the will, and as music has the power of soothing vile passions and exciting noble emotions, so we should not discard this splendid aid when rousing our will to concentrative efforts. Therefore, before you begin to meditate on God, incline your heart towards Him by some kind of sacred music. Sing some noble songs or chant some verses from holy books; the chill with which the world often freezes your higher sentiments will be quickly dissipated by such a procedure, and in the consequent glow of sweet fervour, your mind will easily get concentrated on God.

Music has so great a power in directing our mind to God, that many pious men have adopted it as the sole means of God-realisation. By singing God's praises, by describing in heart-stirring songs His dealings with men in many ages, by praising the ways of His saints in sweet strains, they feel so much edified, so much lifted above the disheartening influence of the world, and brought into such rapturous communion with God, that

they do not desire to follow any other method for the improvement of their souls. They believe, "as birds fly away from the tree under which a man claps his hands, so sins and all sinful inclinations leave him who sings the glory of the Lord while clapping his hands in joy." So, if possible, music as an aid to concentration should be adopted by you.

Of the various stages of concentration of mind attained through systematic meditation on God, our sacred books have laid special emphasis on two, *viz.*, Dhyana and Samadhi. The first is reached on the way to the second. When Dhyana develops, when it deepens, it brings in the state of Samadhi.

What is Dhyana?

Dhyana is that state of concentration in which a single idea is present in consciousness. We all know that when we plunge ourselves into any serious thought, our sphere of consciousness narrows itself. At first, we are conscious of our surroundings, we are conscious of various objects around us, and notwithstanding our desire to allow only one current of ideas to flow in our mind, many cross currents arise—many undesirable ideas, on account of their near or remote association with the desirable ones, make their appearance in our mind and cause distraction. By the effort of our will as we suppress them, and as the even flow of only relevant ideas takes place, we get merged in deep thought. But in deep thought, it is not a single idea, but a series of ideas though closely related that



flow through our mind. When our deep thought deepens still more, we attain the state of Dhyana. In Dhyana, mono-ideism replaces polyideism; one idea becomes conspicuous in our mind by submerging all other ideas.

To give an illustration. When you think of a particular symbolical image of God, say, Siva, if you are not in the habit of meditating often and long, your mind at first refuses to dwell exclusively on that image. It rushes to think of various objects of the world. On the contrary, if you have trained your mind in habits of meditation, it quickly fixes itself on that image. In the first stage of your meditation, other images, other ideas, probably connected with Siva, show themselves in your consciousness; but as your concentration deepens, these images and ideas entirely disappear, and the image of Siva alone fills your mind. Your attention is completely captivated by it. This state of consciousness is called Dhyana by our Yogis. In it one idea almost exclusively dominates the mind.

I have said almost exclusively. For, though, in Dhyana, there is the prominent consciousness of one idea or one image, yet self-consciousness and the consciousness of a feeling of effort are not entirely absent from it. In the state of Dhyana, side by side with the vivid consciousness of the object of meditation, there remains in one's mind a vague consciousness that one is meditating, and that a mental process called meditation is taking place in oneself. Though these elements of consciousness are considerably faint and almost

swamped by the vivid consciousness of the object of meditation, yet they remain in the back-ground and are not entirely displaced. So Dhyana is characterized, as our Yogis tell us, by the tri-une consciousness of the contemplator's self, the act of contemplation, and the object of contemplation.

When Dhyana deepens still more, it passes into the higher state of Samadhi. In Samadhi, the two subordinate elements of consciousness—the faint consciousness of the self and the consciousness of the feeling of effort—totally disappear, and the image of the object of contemplation reigns supreme in the mind. In this state a man sees the object he meditates on, as it were, in a strong blazing light, and his heart is filled with exquisite joy.

There is a still higher state of concentration of which our Yogis speak. It is a state in which our mind becomes entirely quiescent. No thought, no image, ruffles it; an infinite calm spreads over it. Experiencing that ineffable stillness of mind, a Yogi realises the true nature of his self—its distinctness from the changing things of the world; its separateness from the body, mind, and senses; its glory, and its infinitude. In the technical language of Yoga philosophy, this last-mentioned state of Samadhi is called Asamprajnata Samadhi, while the one preceding it, the one in which a Yogi's consciousness is filled with a single idea, is called Samprajnata Samadhi.

How difficult it is for any ordinary man to attain

the state of Dhyana, not to speak of Samprajnata or Asamprajnata Samadhi. Every man who is sincere and given to self-examination knows this to his regret. When he sits down to meditate on God, either thousand irrelevant worldly thoughts steal unawares into his mind, or sleep overpowers it, bringing in it instead of the bright daylight of Dhyana, the dark night of unconsciousness. Distracting thought and sleep are the two enemies of contemplation against which an ordinary man has to be on his guard.

Modern psychology teaches that the very nature of consciousness is change. Mind requires change at all times. One sensation, or one idea, soon brings on unconsciousness. Let the same sound be continuously heard by any man, he will at first be filled with vexation, but if the sound continues, he will gradually become oblivious of it—the painful consciousness will give place to unconsciousness. All of us know that the ticking of clocks in our rooms is very seldom heard by us. If a man lives near a cataract on some mountain, he gets so accustomed to its roaring that it, rarely, if ever, appears prominently in his consciousness. We see also that children often fall asleep when for a long time they are forced to gaze on white figures on a black board. Even in the same manner, it is natural (so modern psychologists would say) for a man to fall asleep when he tries to meditate—tries to have a single idea in his mind.

This generalization of modern psychology is true,

but only partially true. By practice, our mind can get over this tendency toward unconsciousness when a single idea is allowed to reign in it. Mono-ideism brings on oblivion in an ordinary mind ; it does not do so in the mind of a Yogi. Nevertheless, an ordinary man who is just entering on the path of meditation cannot but take into consideration this truth pointed out by modern psychology. As an ordinary man's mind requires change, as it requires a certain amount of roving, so when it is learning to meditate, it should be allowed a little movement—a little variation of ideas. But this movement should be so regulated that it may soon cease, and the state of calm contemplation of a single idea be easily attained.

So Yogis recommend some practices preliminary to Dhyana. Let a man, who is desirous of attaining the state of Dhyana, but who finds it hard to fix his mind on a single idea or a single object, first accustom himself to Manasa Puja or mental worship. Let him think of God in his heart in some symbolical form ; let him contemplate this form as surrounded by a divine halo and so decorated as to arrest his attention ; let him in imagination worship this image in the way in which he would do if the Divine Being whose symbol it is were to be present before him ; let him to his heart's satisfaction offer flowers and other beautiful things and wave lights before the adored shape ; and then, when his mind has by these different movements—movements which gave it a little free play, but at the same time trained

it to concentrate itself,—got calm, let him try to practise Dhyana, try to think of the object of meditation alone, and nothing else.

Or, let him as an exercise preliminary to Dhyana adopt another practice, *viz.*, Mantrajapah. Let him repeat any sacred word and fix his mind on its meaning. The repeated utterance of the word will keep the mind alert and prevent its restlessness. Then, after some time, when his mind has abandoned its roving tendency, let him meditate on God without any such help.

By such methods, when his mind has learnt to enter into the state of Dhyana, has become accustomed to meditate on God in some symbolical form, then he should try to realise that God, whose symbol he is meditating on, is one with his self, that He is actuating him in all his actions, that He is his life—his inmost soul. When by constant meditation he has realised this, he should give up the symbolical form and think of the Formless Eternal Infinite who is one with his self, and besides whom nothing exists. When thus he shall learn to dwell on the Infinite in rapt meditation, thousand springs of joy, like springs of nectar, will well up from within and bathe his soul, and his oneness with the Supreme will be a realised fact.

Any amount of description, however glowing, can never give an idea of the joy of contemplating on God; much more this is true of the infinite bliss that accompanies God-realization. As he who has not tasted a mango can never imagine what a mango is; as

he who has not entered into married life can never form any idea of conjugal felicity; as he who is ignorant and has no taste for learning can never conjecture the kind of happiness intellectual pursuits bring to the intellectual man; even so a worldly man can never understand what an inexpressible joy—joy infinitely transcending that which comes from the possession of a large hoard of gold or from the most successful triumph in this world—can be had the concentration of mind on God. Learn, therefore, to concentrate your mind on Him; try to taste the sweetness of Dhyana and Samadhi, and the inexpressible happiness rising from them.

But remember, no man can rightly contemplate on God, unless he is pure in heart and pure in deed. Men given to vice and sensual pleasure may profess to be Yogis, pretend to have advanced far in meditative practices, and thus for the gratification of some base selfish motive, may try to delude others; but you should never put your trust in them, always remembering the Eternal truth, presented by one of our Upanishads in the most explicit language and corroborated by all the great teachers of humanity, that the pure in heart alone can realise God by meditation. Kathopanishad,\* says:—

*Navirato duscharitat nasantha na samahitah:*

*Nasantamanaso vapi prajnanenainamapnuut.*

He who has not abandoned wrong-doing, has not brought under his control his senses and mind, has not contemplated on God, can never realise Him.

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\* Chap. I, 2, 24.

So, according to this text, for the attainment of Supreme Knowledge, for the realization of God, a man must have purity of character, fully-controlled senses and mind, and habits of meditation. By mentioning purity of character first, the Upanishad emphasises the fact that it is the first essential condition to be fulfilled by a man desirous of realising God. If a man is pure in character, he will, without difficulty, attain success in meditation. Without purity of character, all his efforts in that direction will be vain ; for, successful contemplation of God and vileness of character are as opposite as heaven and hell.

See therefore that you do not fall into temptation and get into the ways of the wicked ; keep a strict watch over your senses, and let not evil enter into your lives through any of these gateways ; suppress lust, greed, anger and all other evil passions if ever they rise in your breasts. Above all, always keep yourselves disinterestedly engaged in good deeds. Disinterested good work will strike a death-blow at the root of selfishness, which alone originates all evil passions and deeds.

It is selfish motives that mostly rule men in all their actions. It is selfish actions that slowly make them lose self-control and turn them into slaves of their passions. Under the influence false ideas born of selfishness men pursue pleasure, or assert their power in various ways. All their actions, all their pleasures and pains, strengthen but their selfishness. Natural it is, therefore, that such men, when they sit

down to meditate, will find their minds oscillating; natural it is that the images of things that they long to attain will disturb their minds. The odour of selfish worldly life cling to their hearts and sicken them even when they desire to enjoy the pure air of meditation. As meditation is essentially an effort of the will, and as they have sold their will in slavery to the world, they cannot, when they desire, concentrate their mind. Let them, therefore, regain the freedom of their will, make it vigorous and capable of the highest spiritual effort. And this they can do by growing pure and unselfish in life. With the wearing off of their selfishness, with the purification of their hearts of all their evil proclivities, will come back to them their lost self-control.

Grow, therefore, my friends, pure in heart by strictly guarding your senses and keeping yourselves always engaged in unselfish good deeds. Thus growing pure, when you shall sit down to meditate, then your mind, eschewing all worldly thoughts, will, like a bird returning to its nest at the close of day, or like an angel winging his way back from earth to heaven, eagerly seek God and rest in Him with love; then you will see His infinite beauty, and be filled with inexpressible unbounded joy! Blessed are those that get such a vision and taste such joy through concentration!

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# Aum.



OF all the expressions, words, and syllables used in our sacred books to signify the idea of God, none is considered to be so sacred as AUM. Though in these books are found thousands of names of God denoting various aspects of His nature, yet, to none of them is attached by religious men so much importance as to this short sacred syllable. It is stated that the essence of all speech is in the Vedas, and the essence of the Vedas is in AUM. The Lord Krishna says in the Gita, "I am the taste in waters; I am the light in the sun and the moon; I am the Aumkara in the Vedas, the sound-principle in Akasa, the manliness in men."

Before entering into the study of the signification of this syllable, "AUM," let us enquire a little into its structure.

As in studying the human frame, we learn Anatomy first, and then Physiology; (Anatomy deals with the structure of the living body; Physiology with the functions of various organs of which it is made up;) even so, we should understand first the structure of AUM, the elementary sounds which go to form it before we can understand their functions—the ideas they signify. AUM is made up of three sounds, *viz.*, the sound A, U, and M, though it is usually pronounced and spelled as OM. Sanskrit grammar allows the fusion of the sounds

of A and U into O; consequently, the latter pronunciation and spelling are often adopted.

Now let us try to understand the manner in which all speech-sounds are produced. This will help us a great deal in grasping the signification of AUM.

Modern physicists and physiologists have made an elaborate study of sound. When we speak, air is driven out from our lungs. The moving air comes in contact with two cords stretched over a box-like organ called Larynx situated in our throat, and sets them in vibration. Then the vibrations of these cords are communicated to the air of our mouth. The mouth acts as a resonator and deepens the vibrations. As the vibrations of air generated by the trembling reeds of an organ are deepened by its pipes, or as the vibrations of the Gramophone diaphragm are deepened by its horn, even so the vibrations of air caused by vocal cords are deepened by our mouth. The deepened vibrations are communicated by the air of our mouth to the air outside; when the outside air vibrates in unison with the air of the mouth, these vibrations, travelling in waves and ripples, reach ears of men. Behind each ear of man, there is a cavity covered by a fine membrane. When aerial vibrations reach this membrane, it vibrates, and transmits its tremors through a complicated system of ossicles to certain nerve-endings, which in their turn transmit them to the cells of the sensorium of the brain. When brain-cells move, there flashes forth almost immediately the consciousness of the sound.

Our ancient philosophers gave in their own way a more or less similar account of the production and perception of speech-sounds. They said that from the lungs air is expelled by internal heat or energy; then the moving air comes in contact with throat, palate, lips, and other parts of the mouth, and gives rise to a sound. The sound thus produced travels in the form of waves and ripples (*Vichi taranga nayena*) and reaches the sense of hearing of the perceiver. Some of the philosophers of old were of opinion that the sense of hearing, which is a subtle material body, stretches out to the place where any sound is produced in order to grasp it. The reason for this supposition of theirs was that our hearing can find out, as soon as it perceives any sound, the nearness or remoteness of its source. So these philosophers thought that if the sense of hearing did not go out to the source of sound, it could not form any idea of its situation in space. Be that as it may, whether sound reaches the sense of hearing or the latter stretches out to receive it, one thing all ancient philosophers taught that sound produced by the air of the mouth affects the sense of hearing. When it is thus affected, a report of this fact is communicated by Manas or attentive faculty to Budhi or the intellect. The Budhi thereby undergoes a change corresponding to the nature of the sound. When this change takes place in Budhi, it flashes up with the light of Purusha or Atma. This flashing up of the Budhi with the light of Purusha is in popular language called

Perception. Thus our ancient philosophers explained the production of speech-sounds and the subsequent perception of them by persons.

You can see that both the ancient and the modern accounts of the way in which speech-sounds are produced are not materially different. The important facts connected with the production and perception of such sounds to which I wish to draw your attention are that when any sound is produced by the human throat there first arise air-vibrations that are inaudible ; they are then strengthened and deepened by the apparatus of the mouth so that they become audible ; then again, after these vibrations have produced sensation, they gradually become slower and slower, gradually lose the power of affecting our ears, and finally, pass into the inaudible state. This last fact is observed not only in the case of speech-sounds, but also in the case of sounds produced by means other than the human throat. Just carefully listen to the sounds of a church-bell. It begins to toll ; its ding-dong sounds continue for some time. Then, when the ringing stops, the last note of the bell sounds on for some time ; it grows fainter and fainter ; then it melts into such subtle vibrations that we hardly feel them ; finally, they become inaudible. The same melting into the inaudible state may be observed in the chime of a clock. Though the human voice passes into inaudibility very abruptly, yet it also gives rise to air-vibrations too fine to be perceived by our ears. When I utter AUM, I first give rise to air-vibrations that are inaudible ; then

these inaudible air-vibrations become audible—the sounds, A U and M are heard in succession; then, when the last sound has been produced, there go on subtle vibrations imperceptible to us. They are too delicate to be caught by our ears, yet they exist none the less.

So, in uttering AUM as well as other words, we produce two kinds of air-waves, one definable and the other indefinable, the one audible and the other inaudible.

All words, made of speech-sounds, signify certain ideas or sentiments. Even such exclamatory sounds as Ah! Eh! etc., which men often utter, represent certain sentiments which are stirred in their hearts. As the letters of the written alphabet visibly symbolize various sounds we utter through our mouth, so all words signify certain ideas or feelings.

What ideas or feelings are signified by the this sacred word AUM?

AUM signifies first the ideas of Impersonal and Personal God.

What do we understand by the expression Impersonal God?

All things in Nature are perpetually changing—nothing is stationary. Gaze up to the sky above, gaze down to the ground below, you will notice change everywhere. The stars are changing, the earth is changing, the seasons are changing, trees, shrubs, and human faces are all undergoing change. But a little thought will bring home to you the fact that for the perception

of change, there must be something less changeable. Change presupposes changelessness.

When a train moves away from the platform of a station, we perceive the motion of the train because the platform does not move. Again, we notice various changes in the platform. After it has been used for some time, the railway engineer, condemns its structure. He gets it dismantled and constructs another platform of a new design. We perceive the reconstruction of the platform; because, the other parts of the station remain unchanged. Again, after a time, the whole station is pulled down and rebuilt. Then too, we perceive the change; because, the surroundings of the station remain the same. In course of time, these surroundings undergo material alteration, and they are noted by us; because, compared with these surroundings we ourselves remain unchanged. Further, the changes going on in us—our childhood, boyhood, youth, etc.,—are perceived by us; because, with the physical changes caused by advancing age, our mind does not change much. In this manner, if we push the reasoning far, we cannot but admit that behind the ceaseless changes going on everywhere in the universe, there must be a principle unchangeable in its nature. Change is possible, change is perceptible, because that changeless principle exists. This principle not knowing change but making change possible is the ultimate basis of the universe. It is none other than God.

If you think over the subject a little more, you

will understand that God, the basis of the universe, must be infinite. He cannot be a finite being; for, all finite existences are determined by other finite existences. As God is the ultimate principle of the universe, as nothing exists independently of Him, as all things exist in and through Him, so He cannot be limited by any other existence. We see also that all finite things are liable to destruction; God cannot be so; hence, He must be infinite in His nature.

For the same reason, we conclude that God is essentially one; for duality presupposes finitude. If there be two Gods, both will be finite. We should then seek for some other Being higher than them, through whom both of them exist, and then that Being should be regarded as the true God. But as we have said, God is the ultimate principle of the universe, so He cannot but be one.

Again, God must be the source and origin of our consciousness. The ultimate principle of the universe must be the origin of conscious life, wherever that life may be. All things of the universe exist for consciousness. But for consciousness, they would be meaningless entities or non-entities. So God, the ultimate principle of the universe, must be the root of consciousness. Nay, our scriptures say, consciousness is His very nature; it is His glory.

Thus reasoning, we conclude that God is changeless, infinite, essentially one, and the source and origin of conscious life. The conception implied by this

conclusion is what we understand by the expression Impersonal God.

You can well understand that the idea of Impersonal God, reached by metaphysical reasoning, is not so attractive to an ordinary religious man. However grand may be this idea of the Impersonal One, it produces only a faint impression on his mind. The words, changeless, infinite, etc., give rise to no concrete consciousness in him. So his heart longs for a more definite idea of God—an idea not resembling an outline picture, but a finished piece of art with many lights and shades, with many striking colours. In short, most men require the conception of personal God.

The word “personal” is derived from the word “persona,” which means mask. When we ascribe to God certain attributes not derogatory to his infinitude, when we put on Him as it were a mask of characteristics which enable us to form a concrete picture of Him in our minds, we get the idea of Personal God. The incomprehensible Infinite thus becomes to certain extent comprehensible to us.

What attributes can we ascribe to Him without any offence to His greatness?

All objects of nature possess three common characteristics, *viz.*, birth, existence in time, and death. All things, all creatures, are born, they exist for some time and then meet with dissolution. From the minute molecules to the orbs of heaven, from diatom to man, all conform to this rule. As God is the ultimate



principle of the universe, as all things exist in and through Him, we shall not be wrong if we regard Him as the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe. † By doing this, we shall merely refer the common characteristics of all objects to Him without whom neither they nor any of their traits can exist.

In our ancient sacred books are given three names to these three aspects of God's nature. In them, God the creator is called Brahma, God the preserver is called Vishnu, God the destroyer is called Rudra. Do not think that Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra are three different personages. Our scriptures explicitly tell us that they are not so, but they are only symbolic representations of the same Being.

*Sa Brahma sa Sivaḥ sendrah sokharah paramah  
svarat :*

*Sayeva Vishnuh sa pranah sakalagnih sa chandramah.*

“He alone is spoken of as Brahma, as Siva, as Indra, as the Supreme Self-shining Eternal ; He alone is called Vishnu, Life, All-destroying Fire, and the Moon.” \*

Let us now turn to consider the signification of the component sounds of AUM. A (Akara) represents Brahma ; U (Ukara) represents Vishnu ; M (Makara) represents Rudra. And that indefinable and imperce-

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† To Personal God are ascribed also the attributes of Omnipotence, Omniscience. and moral perfection.

\* Kaivalyopanishat, Kh. I, 8.

ptible sound, those inaudible air waves, symbolize the Infinite Impersonal God whom neither our mind can comprehend nor our speech can describe.

Let us now turn from the contemplation of the objective world, the ceaseless changes of which bespeak the presence of the Changeless One, to the contemplation of the subjective world—the world that exists within us. The great German philosopher Immanuel Kant said that two things excited his wonder, *viz.*, the starry heavens above and the moral law within. It is not merely the moral law within, which is the expression of our spiritual nature, that excites our wonder, but all other mental facts, all other mental phenomena, do the same.

During our lifetime, we are in one or other of these three mental states, *viz.*, waking, dreaming, or deep sleep. We are either awake, and so in active relation with the outer world, or we are dreaming, seeing fanciful images with pleasure or pain, or we are in deep sleep, forgetful of our joys and sorrows. The first two states are matters of our daily experience, while deep sleep—sleep free from all disturbance of dreams—we get but rarely.

In the waking state, our consciousness is vivid, our senses perform their different functions, and our mind receives impressions from the outer world, stores images corresponding to these impressions, and revives them as occasions arise. Whatever we see, hear, touch, taste or smell, as well as whatever emotions we feel, all these

objects and feelings impress themselves upon the substance of our mind, and after they have thus impressed themselves, our mind retains imprints or images of them for future use.

Modern psychologists have demonstrated that our brain is an organ perpetually receiving various impressions, external and internal, with all our sensations, thoughts, feelings, and volitions. As these impressions are recorded by the living substance of the brain, reproduction of these sensations, thoughts, etc., can easily take place when the records of such sensations, etc., are acted upon by suitable stimuli.

The psychological views of our ancient philosophers were not very different from those of modern psychologists. Our ancient philosophers regarded mind as a subtle material substance, plastic in its character, capable of receiving various impressions, both external and internal. Whenever any perception rises in us, whenever we think, whenever we experience any feeling, whenever we exert our will in any kind of action, the substance of our mind undergoes complex changes corresponding to our sensations, thoughts, feelings, and actions. When these sensations, thoughts, feelings, and actions are ended, they leave behind in the substance of the mind certain Samskaras, marks, or images, which become the seeds of similar psychic experiences in the future.

Recollection is nothing but the revival of these Samskaras by the force of the will. To give an example.

I have seen Benares. The crescent course of the Ganges, the numerous beautiful edifices with spires of temples rising from amongst them and shining against the blue sky, have produced complex impressions on my mind. The Samskaras or images of these objects are lying buried in its depth. If I like, I can revive them, and a picture of Benares more or less vivid can rise up before my mind's eye. I can recollect Benares because the imprints or images of the objects I saw there exist in my mind; but for these imprints, recollection will not be possible.

To give another illustration. Just observe what a complex activity I am engaged in as I am speaking to you. I am seeing your faces beaming with intelligence; I am turning my eyes from some of you to others. As occasions are arising, the expressions of my face are changing, and my hands are making some movements. These activities are but the echoes of greater activities going on within me. I have stored my mind with various images. As I am speaking, I am drawing out of the store-house of my mind many of these images and making them cross the threshold of consciousness; so they are giving rise to ideas and ideas are uniting to form thoughts. Mark, as I am speaking to you, I am allowing only those Samskaras,—those images, those ideas,—which are relevant to the subject of my discourse, to revive and enter into the sphere of consciousness; all other images, all other ideas, are kept down by my will. As suitable ideas are rising into my

consciousness, I am finding from the same store-house of my mind proper words to express them. When I shall get down from the platform, that intense activity of the will by which only particular kinds of ideas are being revived in my mind will relax, and then many ideas, many thoughts, unconnected with the subject of this discourse, will again emerge from the dark depths of my mind.

Now, you can well understand that when we think we revive series of images or ideas stocked in our mind—ideas connected with the subject of our thought. And you can well understand also that, as these ideas are revived again and again, they grow in clearness, and we do not feel so much effort in reproducing them.

So in the waking state, we either receive impressions from outside, or strengthen the corresponding images by reviving them. In it, the twofold process of storage and revival of images goes on within us. In waking, our will is active, our consciousness is clear as broad daylight, and ideas pass in ordered procession through the mind at the bidding of our will.

But in our dreams, things are greatly changed. Vivid consciousness is superseded by hazy consciousness, as if broad daylight gives place to a dubious twilight, and in the prevailing obscurity, impressions received in the waking state are reproduced sometimes in phantasmagoric combinations, sometimes in meaningless chaotic confusion, to fill us with the shifting moods of wonder, joy, and sorrow. In dreams, what incongruous fanciful

images are presented before our mental sight ! What joyful or sorrowful words we hear from our friends and acquaintances ! In dreams, we see serpents, tigers, lions, and other wild animals ; we converse with ghosts, fight with them ; we fly through the air like birds, we walk on water defying gravity, and travel in lands we have never seen. In short, all impossible things appear as facts in dreams. And out of the thousand inconsistencies, how wonderfully a patch of consistent experience, almost as vivid as any experience of the waking state, rises up for a while, like a firm islet of silt in the midst of a flowing river, to be washed away again by the current of incongruous images !

A man living in a country far from his home goes to bed after a day's toil. Slumber soon makes him oblivious of his surroundings, oblivious of tasks he has undertaken to earn a hard livelihood. He dreams : As if he is flying away from some robbers or some mischievous men who are chasing him. He runs through rough and steep roads to escape their clutches. He is very much exhausted and extremely afraid of being overtaken by his pursuers. Then suddenly, the whole scene is washed away by the waters of oblivion ! He sleeps soundly for a while. Again he dreams : As if after a long absence from his wife and children he is going to meet them in his own country. Slowly he wends his way to his house with his heart agitated with the thought of his dear ones. Now he is before his cottage door. Lo ! Who comes out of it but his dear

wife? Who can express the joy of such meeting? Fond greetings and embraces follow. His children come out and clasp his hands, pull him by the clothes, and he kisses them and affectionately pats them on the head. While he is thus bestowing caresses on them, behold! the scene changes again! He is not in his home, but in a dense forest, surrounded not by children, but by wild animals, one of which is fiercely staring at him! He starts up in fear.

Such dreams most of us must have experienced; they are full of consistencies and inconsistencies.

All such dreams are produced by the combination of images stored in the mind in our waking state. In the waking state, when we think, we haul up, by the effort of our will, these images from the depth of our mind, and make them cross the threshold of consciousness. And as I told you, we make them appear in order. But in dreams, that higher activity of the mind by which the flow of ideas is controlled, disappears almost entirely; consequently, images of past experience rise up into consciousness in disorder and confusion. They give rise by their combination to highly impossible scenes. The mind in the waking state may be likened to a well-ordered school-room in which the teacher is present. In such a room, the boys come and go and do their appointed tasks without any noise. But let the school-master be absent for some time, or fall asleep in his chair, what do we observe? Instead of order there is disorder and confusion. The boys begin to play. One

boy bends, another rides on him; a third comes and pulls them down on the floor; others laugh loudly, join in the scuffle, and increase the confusion; silence and order fly from the room for the time being. Even so, in dreams, our will, the power that maintains order and harmony in the chamber of our mind, relaxes its activity, and so incongruous combinations of images rise up into consciousness. The occasional consistency of dreams is caused by involuntary attention, or by a slight activity of the will. Generally, this slight voluntary activity takes the form of expectation. It is expectation that makes us at times ascribe to others words which we ourselves think that they would utter; when these words rise up in our mind, we involuntarily try to utter them, and on account of the illusory character of the dreaming state, they seem to fall from their lips. Thus from the materials stored in the waking state, the grotesque structures of dreams are built by our mind.

In deep sleep, the fanciful incongruous images no longer rise up, darkness spreads over our soul, and our mental vision is entirely obscured. In waking, our mind is characterized by vivid consciousness; it is like a well-lighted room with its doors and windows thrown open. In dreams, our mind is characterized by hazy consciousness; it is like a room, having a mellow subdued light, with heavily screened doors and windows. In deep sleep, darkness reigns in our mind; it then becomes like a room with its doors shut and window-blinds drawn



fully down. Or to vary the illustration. In deep sleep, as if the magic lantern which shows the vivid many-colored pictures of the waking state, the twilight-scenes of dreams, is covered up, and its light has no object to shine upon.

In deep sleep, though darkness prevails in our mind, yet the light of our self is not put out. With the advent of deep sleep our self, the abode of the light of consciousness, does not disappear, but as there is no activity of the mind and the senses, and as no sense-impressions or images are presented to it for illumination, so there is an apparent cessation of consciousness. The light of our self shines on even in deep sleep, like the light of the magic lantern when its lense is capped. For, if our self were put out in deep sleep, we could never say, when we get up from it, "I slept soundly; I had no disturbance." Our philosophers say that such utterance indicating some memory of past experience proves the existence of the self even in deep sleep. It is not that consciousness disappears in that state, but it has darkness for its object,—it makes darkness perceptible. And we can well understand that if our self be really put out in deep sleep, we can never remember incidents that happened before we slept. For, owing to the extinction of our self in deep sleep, a new self we must have when we wake up, and this new self can never recognise the experiences of our old self that existed before deep sleep. So our self is not put out, does not die in deep sleep, but shines in

its own light, even when darkness overpowers our mind.

Our self is the golden thread that binds together the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep—its continuity is never broken. Varying the illustration, we may say, our self is the eternal ground on which are painted at one time the bright pictures of waking, at another time, the hazy-scenes of dreams, and at another time, nothing but the dark shadows of deep sleep. Our self shines through the variegated experiences of waking, even as the sun shines through the many-colored glasses of a church-window; our self shines through the confused hazy experiences of the dream-state, even as the same luminary shines through the ground glasses of an art studio; our self shines on even in deep sleep, as the god of day does even when smoked glasses are fitted up in the windows of a house to obscure his light.

Just as God may be regarded as the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe, though His nature is essentially one, even so, our self regarded from three points of view, has three aspects, *viz.*, the self as shining upon our waking experience, the self as shining upon our dream-experience, and the self as shining upon the darkness of our deep sleep. In the technical language of Vedanta, these three aspects of the self are called Viswa, Taijasa and Prajna.

A, U, and M (Akara, Ukara, and Makara) represent these three aspects of the self. A stands for the self

as shining upon our waking experience ; U stands for the self as shining upon our dreams, and M stands for the self as shining upon the darkness of our deep sleep. And very aptly do these three component sounds of AUM symbolize three aspects of the self. For, A is the simplest of all sounds. In uttering it, we open our mouth wide ; our mouth which acts as a resonator to the sound-vibrations, assumes the shape of a funnel. The sound is emitted freely by our throat. When we utter U, we produce the sound in the same way as when we utter A, only we change the form of the resonator. In uttering U, we make our mouth assume the shape of a bottle with a short neck ; this we do by closing up our mouth a little by moving our lips. So the sound of U may be said to be produced out of the sound of A by the changing of the shape of the mouth. Therefore, fitly does U symbolize our self as shining upon our dreams ; for, have we not seen that our dreams are created out of the experiences of our waking state ? And in dreams, in our mind comes a twilight of consciousness midway between the glare of waking and the darkness of deep sleep. In uttering AUM, we utter first A with open mouth ; we utter U with partially closed mouth ; then when we come to utter M, our mouth is closed, and the effort of uttering the syllable is ended. As U, the sound intermediate between A and M, symbolizes our self as shining upon our dreams—dreams in which we experience all things in twilight as it were,—so M fitly symbolizes our self as shining upon our deep sleep—deep sleep in which a

temporary darkness overpowers our mind, and the activities which characterized it in waking and dreams are ended.

There is a fourth state of mind besides waking, dreaming, and deep sleep—a state in which there exist neither the distractions of waking or dreaming nor the darkness of deep sleep. It is a state in which our self illuminates our mind with a celestial light, and the mind sees the glory of the self in supreme bliss. The nature of this state cannot be described by any man. It is a state which a blessed few, the spiritually perfect, attain by meditation; the ineffable joy of such attainment is incommunicable by language. Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say, One can never describe the experience of this blessed state, just as a dumb man can never describe his dreams. Though indefinable, it is none the less real. Nay, sages and saints speak of it in the highest language, and point it out to us as the goal of our spiritual endeavours. The self as revealed in this fourth state is symbolized by that indefinable unmanifest sound—those inaudible air-waves—from which the sounds of A, U and M rise and into which they melt away.

We have seen that when we contemplate the objective world,—the visible universe and the changes going on everywhere in it,—we conclude that there is God, the one Immutable Being, behind these changes; that He may be called the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe; and that AUM symbolizes

the impersonal as well as these three personal aspects of the Deity. We have seen also that when we contemplate the subjective world—the various states of our mind,—we find that before our self are presented three ordinary states, *viz.*, waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, and a fourth one called Turiya in which the real nature the self is realised by our mind; and that the different aspects of the self as revealed in these states are symbolized by AUM. Now, there naturally rises a question as to the relation existing between God and our self, between the principle underlying the outer universe of Nature and the principle underlying the inner universe of our mental experiences, between the basis of the macrocosm and the basis of the microcosm. Are God and our self two independent beings? Or is there any connection between them? Or are they really one?

A philosophic system that claims to give us an insight into the nature of the ultimate reality must answer these questions.

Vedanta says, our self has no existence apart from God. God and our self are really one. The identity of God and our self, Vedanta expresses by various formulæ of which the one commonly used is SOHAM.—“I am that.” AUM symbolizes also the important doctrine of Vedanta embodied in this formula.

I told you that AUM may be spelt as OM. O is a long vowel which is formed by the union of A and U, according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar. OM or

AUM is derived from SOHAM. If you remove s (Sakara) and HA (Hakara and Akara) from SOHAM we get OM. So OM or AUM is a contracted form of SOHAM.\* Such derivation by contraction is in harmony with the genius of the Sanskrit language. So when we utter AUM, not only do we signify God, not only do we signify our self, but we signify also the identity of God and our self.

But many will ask, how can this doctrine of Vedanta—the doctrine of the identity of God and man—be accepted by sane persons? “I am That!” “I am God!” How can man, a tiny creature crawling on a corner of this globe, whose magnitude is as that of a bubble compared with the vast sea of the universe in which it floats,—how can man, in soundness of mind, identify himself with God, the source of the universe? Helpless in childhood, restrained by superiors in boyhood, slave of passions in youth, weak and subject to ailments in old age, can man assert his unity with the Highest? God is omnipotent; by his command the spheres of heaven smoothly move in their orbits; the sun and the moon rise and set at their appointed hours; the seasons roll and trees bear flowers and fruits; the rivers bring water from the hidden stores of the mountains; man receives these and countless other blessings

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\* *Sakararnam hakararnam lopayitva tatah param :  
Samdhim kuryat purvarupam tatasau pranavo  
bhavet.*

N.B.—Various significations are attached to AUM, of which the most important ones are dealt with in this discourse.

at God's hands. Should he, forgetting his insignificance, his entire dependence on these blessings for his life and happiness, fill himself with an unnatural pride, and blasphemously assert his oneness with the Deity? God is omniscient—at one glance He sees the secrets of all hearts; what is the range of man's knowledge? For centuries he blunders on, and then, discovering some fact of nature, forms a theory of certain things for his guidance. After that, he sits down in satisfaction, thinking that he has found out a truth and built a correct theory. Lo! after some time, another fact forces itself upon his notice, and his old fondly-cherished theory is exploded! In this way, falling again and again into errors, he is somehow guessing his way towards Truth: How can man be one with the Omniscient Being? God is perfectly just, infinitely merciful; man's notion of justice, man's compassion are so undeveloped that he robs even his brother of his due, and reduces even his near relations to beggary. All vices noticeable in this world, all crimes committed in it, owe their origin to man's injustice and hard-heartedness. Could there be war, could there be theft and robbery, could there be drunkenness and prostitution, if man's moral sense were highly developed? Ignorant, highly selfish, with all brutal instincts still raging in his breast, man often shows his likeness more to a devil than to a God? Can man, whose nature is so imperfect, so full of vile proclivities, say, without falling into the grossest delusions, that he is one with

God? "I am That!" One must be a megalomaniac to say so.

Logical and plausible though these remarks may at first appear to us, yet, on close examination, they turn out to be pointless, for they are based upon a total misconception of the doctrine of Vedanta.

When Vedanta teaches the identity of God and man's self by such expressions as, "SOHAM" "AHAM BRAHMASMI"—"I am That," or TATWAMASI—"Thou art That," you should not take their literal but implied significations. In our every-day life, we are very cautious not to construe always literally the words and phrases used by others. Much more should we be cautious in interpreting the language of Philosophy in this way.

If any Sanskrit word or expression refuses to bear literal interpretation, we arrive at its implied meaning by following one or other of the three methods pointed out by Sanskrit grammarians. Let me give you three examples to illustrate these three methods. (1) When any one says, "Gangayam Ghosah"—"The village of milkmen is situated on the Ganges,"—we do not take the literal meaning of these words. For, no village can actually exist on the waters of the Ganges. By the word "Ganges," we do not understand the water-course, but either of the banks of the river. Thus, in this example, the word "Ganges" is used to denote something quite different from it. (2) When a man gives an order to his servant saying, "Kakebhyo Dadhi Rakshyat"—



“Protect the curd from the crows,”—the servant takes only the implied meaning of his master’s words. If he, literally construing his master’s language, prevents only crows from eating away the curd, but allows cats and other animals to consume it, he is considered a fool. By the word “Crows” he should understand not only crows, but also other animals likely to eat off curd. Thus in this second example, to the word “Crows” is given a more extended signification than it usually bears. (3) On meeting a certain man, when I say, “Soyam Devadatta”—“This is that Devadatta whom I saw before,”—in strict logic, I identify two individuals. For, I saw Devadatta some time ago, in a town, say, Madras, different from Bangalore, where I meet him now. His dress, the weight of his body, the expression of his countenance, the thoughts and feelings of his mind, at the present moment, are quite different from these traits of his when he was in Madras. Then he was dressed in European style, he weighed 150 lbs., there was laughter in his face, his heart was full of joy, and he was forming projects of engaging in a lucrative business; now, he has put on poor Indian dress, he weighs 120 lbs., deep gloom has settled on his countenance, his heart is full of misery, and thoughts of his poverty are gnawing at it day and night; how can the Devadatta of Madras be one with the Devadatta of Bangalore? Logically speaking, these are different men; yet your common-sense says, they are one. Your common-sense rejects from the complex idea of

Devadatta as seen then in Madras, all ideas of his dress, weight, expression of face, temporary thoughts and feelings; it rejects also in the same manner from the idea of Devadatta as seen now in Bangalore, similar ideas about his dress, weight, expression of face, thoughts and feelings, and taking merely the Personality of Devadatta into consideration, concludes, that the Devadatta of Madras and the Devadatta of Bangalore are really one. Behind so many changes, so many accidents, your common sense grasps the unity—the unchanging features of body and mind which form the Personality of Devadatta. Therefore when I say, “This is that Devadatta whom I saw before,” you take the implied meaning of my expression;—you reject the variable traits of Devadatta seen on two occasions, and take only the invariable traits, and so arrive at the true meaning of my words.

Adopting the mode of interpretation illustrated by this third example, you should interpret such Vedantic expressions as “I am That” “Thou art That”—“I am God” “Thou art God.”

What ideas have you of God and your own self? Whatever those ideas may be, they are surely not simple, but highly complex. Analyze those complex ideas; find out what elementary ideas go to form them; trace those elementary ideas to their causes; and thus see whether those ideas have real connection with the nature of God and of your own self.

You think God to be all-powerful. But I ask you,

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Have you not arrived at this idea of God by ascribing to Him some human attributes? You have an idea of your own power, as you are capable of moving various bodies and overcoming resistance when it rises in the path of your activity; you magnify this characteristic of yours infinitely in your mind and characterize God by it; and so you call God all-powerful. You regard God as omniscient. You know only a few things of the universe. Your sphere of knowledge is limited; the sphere of the Unknown which lies beyond it always excites your wonder. Aware of the limited powers of your mind, you picture to yourself a mind that can know everything, near and remote, past and present, and ascribing such a mind to God, you call Him omniscient. You regard God as a perfectly just, a perfectly merciful Being. I ask you, How have you got your ideas of justice and mercy? Have you not got them from your own human experience? Are they not based upon human relations? In the social relations of mankind, these virtues are immensely valued. But for justice and mercy, our life would be unbearable. In this world, we too often come across instances of injustice and hard-heartedness. So our heart longs for perfect justice and perfect mercy. Not finding the perfection of these virtues in men, we ascribe them in perfection to God, and regard God as a perfectly just and a perfectly merciful Being. Thus, on examining your idea of God, you will find that you think of Him in terms derived from human experience.

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However necessary this complex idea of God as an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly just and perfectly merciful Being may be for the spiritual development of man, yet it cannot be denied that this idea is reached by a kind of subtle anthropomorphism. God is immutable, infinite; His nature is indescribable; He is the Absolute; nothing exists besides Him. The epithets borrowed either from human experience such as, the perfectly just and the perfectly merciful, or from the observation of the phenomenal universe, such as, the creator, the preserver, the destroyer, etc, can never represent God as He really is. They tincture the pure idea of God with the colours of human life and the changeable world in which that life is manifested.

Analyze now the idea of your self. Your idea of your self is a very complex one. You think yourself to be the son of certain parents, a native of a certain country; you regard yourself as rich or poor, occupying a high or a low place in society; you think that you are stout or lean, strong or weak, with sound or unsound physical organs, educated or uneducated. So, ideas of the circumstances of your birth, of your wealth, rank, state of body, state of mind, and thousand other similar ideas go to form the complex notion of your self. But a little thought will reveal to you the fact that these ideas which are constituents of the complex notion you have of your self have no real connection with you. You are neither one with your body, nor one with your senses, nor one with your mind, nor in any way con-

nected with your external circumstances. It is not that you are the son of such and such parents, but your body was born as the fruit of their wedlock ; it is not that you are stout or lean, but stoutness or leanness is noticeable in your body ; it is not that you are keen-sighted or short-sighted, but your eyes are strong or weak ; it is not that you are educated or uneducated, but your intellect is developed or undeveloped ; it is not that you are rich or poor, but your wealth is large or small. Your nature is pure simple consciousness. Ascribing to yourself the characteristics of your body, senses, and mind, you have constructed a complex idea. The constituents of this idea owe their origin to things unconnected with your self and obscure your view as to your real nature. Buried under the mountain of foreign ideas, your real nature rarely attracts your notice.

Remove, therefore, from the complex notion you have of God, all such ideas as you have borrowed from human experience—such ideas as, God is omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly just and perfectly merciful, etc., and also such as, God is the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe, etc. ; seek the real nature of the Deity overlooking these attributes imported from the world and human life ; you will find that God is essentially one ; He is Infinite, Immutable, the Eternal Abode of consciousness : Remove in the same way from the notion you have of your self all extraneous ideas—ideas derived from your body, senses, and mind,

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and bodily surroundings; seek your true nature; you will find that your self is pure simple consciousness remaining unchanged in the midst of countless changes taking place in your body, senses, and mind, shining uninterruptedly upon the vivid variegated experiences of waking, upon the phantasmagoric scenes of dreams, and making the darkness of deep sleep perceptible. This unchangeable pure simple consciousness, free from all accidents of thoughts, feelings, and volitions caused by the changes of your mind, this consciousness, which is your true nature, is essentially divine. It is God's nature that is manifesting as consciousness through the aggregate of body, mind, and senses you call your own. As you are identical neither with your body, nor with your senses, nor with your mind, nor even with the aggregate of them; as the very essence of your nature is consciousness, so you are one with God. "That thou art," "Thou art God." There is only the Immutable Infinite God behind your body, senses, and mind.

To use an illustration of our great master Sri Ramakrishna. When you peel off layer after layer the skins of an onion with a view to get at its core, you find nothing but a little ether-filled space, which is one with the infinite space existing everywhere. Even so, when you get at the core of your being by mental analysis, removing all extraneous ideas which obscure it, you find God—God who is within you and outside you, who is the Infinite Eternal Abode of consciousness, and in

whom all things live, move, and have their being. AUM as I have told you, signifies this important teaching of Vedanta about the essential identity of God and man's self.

So when you shall pronounce AUM, there will rise in your mind the idea of God, the immutable principle underlying Nature, the idea of your self, the immutable basis of your mental experiences, and the idea of the identity of God and your self. Thus the idea of the All-pervading Infinite God will be vividly brought to your mind by the utterance of this sacred syllable. Utter therefore AUM repeatedly while you worship. While you utter it, let your mind filled with the ideas implied by it fix itself in rapture on Him who is within you and outside you, and who is your true self. You can find no greater Mantra, no better speech-symbol of the Supreme Being. So one of the Upanishads, in its inimitable language declares :

*Sarve veda yat padamamananti,  
Tapamsi sarvani cha yadvadanti,  
Yadichchanto brahmacharyam charanti,  
Tatte padam samgrahena bravimyomitayetat.*

"I tell you briefly that which all the Vedas consider as the supreme aim of human life, to make men attain which they enjoin on them the discipline of penances and to realise which disciples live with their masters It is expressed by AUM."

Man God for Priesthood

